ENHANCING OUR HOME

RE-READING AND RE-LIVING GANDHIAN THOUGHT



Association of Christian Philosophers of India

ACPI Special Series - 4

ENHANCING OUR HOME

Re-Reading and Re-Living Gandhian Thought

Festschrift in Honour of

Prof. Dr. A. Pushparajan

Edited by

Johnson J. Puthenpurackal



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ENHANCING OUR HOME
Re-Reading and Re-Living Gandhian Thought

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✠BASELIOS CARDINAL CLEEMIS
MAJOR ARCHBISHOP-CATHOLICOS

29 July 2016

MESSAGE

I am very happy to note that the Members of the 'Association of Christian Philosophers of India' (ACPI) are acknowledging the richness of God's blessing to us in the person of Dr. A. Pushparajan. To be a dedicated Catholic and to be open to the world as a committed faithful is that what we see in the person of Dr. Pushparajan. I am really happy to say that Dr. Pushparajan is one of the renowned members of the Catholic Church in India, really rooted in the Indian context where plurality and richness of cultural heritage are the specific characteristics. As a Gandhian scholar he never turns away from socio-political issues and responds to them in the way of dialogue based on human values and Christian Faith.

I take this occasion to joyfully appreciate Dr. A. Pushparajan for his life and witness as a committed lay faithful, philosopher, theologian and visionary. I pray that the Merciful God who has entered into dialogue with humanity continue to strengthen and enlighten Dr. Pushparajan to illumine the Church and the society at large through his gifted life. May God be with him to be his inspiration to revitalize the Indian society in human values and divine blessings. I congratulate the Members of the ACPI in bringing out *Festschrift* in honour of Dr. A. Pushparajan as a fitting memento for his valuable service in the Church and Society.

God bless you all abundantly!

+Baseliscleemis

✠ Baselios Cardinal Cleemis
Major Archbishop-Catholicos of
the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church,
President, Catholic Bishops' Conference of India.

George Cardinal Alencherry
Major Archbishop
Syro -Malabar Church

Prot. No. 1079/2016

July 21, 2016

Message

I am very happy to offer my greetings and best wishes on the occasion of the publication of the Festschrift in honour of Dr. A. Pushparajan, the former Head of the Dept. of Interreligious Relations of Madurai Kamraj Univesity. Dr. Pushparajan is an acknowledged Gandhian scholar and has spent all his academic resources to spread the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation. He is also a devoted Catholic, remaining true to his Catholic faith in spite of the various onerous responsibilities he has held in public life. He is one of the foremost Catholic lay theologians of India. He was also a consultor to the Pontifical council for Faith and Culture in Rome and has used his talents to enrich the understanding of the world on the greatness of various cultures.

Dr. Pushparajan is passionately committed to the Church as well as to the nation. He is always alert to the burning issues of the country and has risen on those occasions to offer his guidance and direction. His services to the Church are stellar and he has served on several commissions of the CBCI. As an intrepid defender of the Catholic faith, he has always been in the forefront to explain the theological and social doctrines of the Church.

Like Schumacher who wrote "Small is Beautiful" to highlight the importance of Gandhian thought for the betterment of nations, Dr. Pushparajan too has succeeded in convincing the nations of the world to care for the underprivileged and the poor using Gandhian analysis of economic resources. His deep immersion in Gandhian thought has added a new dimension to the understanding of the social doctrines of the Church.

It is very appropriate that the Christian philosophers of India have decided to honour him and his magnificent contributions to the social development of India by publishing a Festschrift.

I wish Dr. Pushparajan all the blessings of God Almighty on this happy occasion. May God bless him abundantly to continue his work for the Church and the country!

+ G Alencherry

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MESSAGE

For wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; prudence will watch over you; and understanding will guard you. (Proverbs 2:10-11)

It is with great joy that I express my deep appreciation to Prof. Dr. A. Pushparajan on the occasion of this ***Festschrift*** in his honour being published by the Association of Christian Philosophers of India (ACPI).

Prof. Pushparajan has rendered 33 years of brilliant academic service as philosopher, teacher and researcher in prestigious secular and religious institutions in the country. It is a rare achievement for a lay person to become a proficient scholar in philosophy as well as in theology. His teaching and writing bears witness to the deeply Christian values that he holds and propagates in civil society. He has always sought to explain the Church's teachings supported with good philosophical reasoning.

During the National Eucharistic Congress held in Mumbai from November 12 - 15, 2015, Prof. Pushparajan gave an insightful catechesis on the 'Family and Eucharist' which was deep and much appreciated by those present. Giving a personal testimony, he explained with conviction how the Eucharist gives our families nourishment and strength to face life's most difficult challenges and to become powerful instruments of proclamation.

The wisdom and erudition of Prof. Pushparajan has been much appreciated not only in India but also abroad. He has held many important positions in ecclesiastical and secular professional bodies on the international, national and local levels. As Secretary to the Commission for Dialogue in the Archdiocese of Madurai for over 15 years, he was known to be an ardent promoter of inter-religious harmony. He is an acknowledged scholar of the Gandhian vision of life. His many publications and contributions in professional research journals stand testimony to his scholarly achievement.

I interacted with Dr. Pushparajan often at several theological conferences. More recently he was on the Governing Board of the NBCLC and I observed his insightful and creative suggestions and comments on the development of this important Institute. We always valued his intervention.

On the occasion of this important milestone in his life, I join the Association of Christian Philosophers of India (ACPI) in felicitating Prof. Pushparajan and invoking God's choicest blessings on him.

My Hearty Congratulations to Prof. Pushparajan!

+ Oswald Gracias

✠ **Oswald Cardinal Gracias**
Archbishop of Bombay
&
President, CCBI
President, FABC

August 22, 2016
Feast of the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary

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Prot. No. 19/M/CTPT/2016

Message

I am happy to learn that the 'Association of Christian Philosophers India' (ACPI) is publishing a Festschrift in honour of Dr. A. Pushparajan, who has been a faithful and committed member of ACPI, right from its infancy. I am also happy to learn that even after having a brilliant career as philosopher, scholar and teacher for 33 years at Madurai, he still continues to be at the service of the Church by delivering Guest Lectures in various Institutes of Theology and Spirituality.

In the CBCI he is well-known as an erudite scholar of Gandhian thought, Interreligious dialogue and Ecology. He has contributed immensely as a consulter to the CBCI over the years in various Commissions; particularly in the CBCI Commission for Dialogue (2004-11). I had the opportunity to interact with him many times during the CBCI meetings and to personally see his dedication and commitment towards the Church in preaching the Good News of Peace, Joy, Love and Justice.

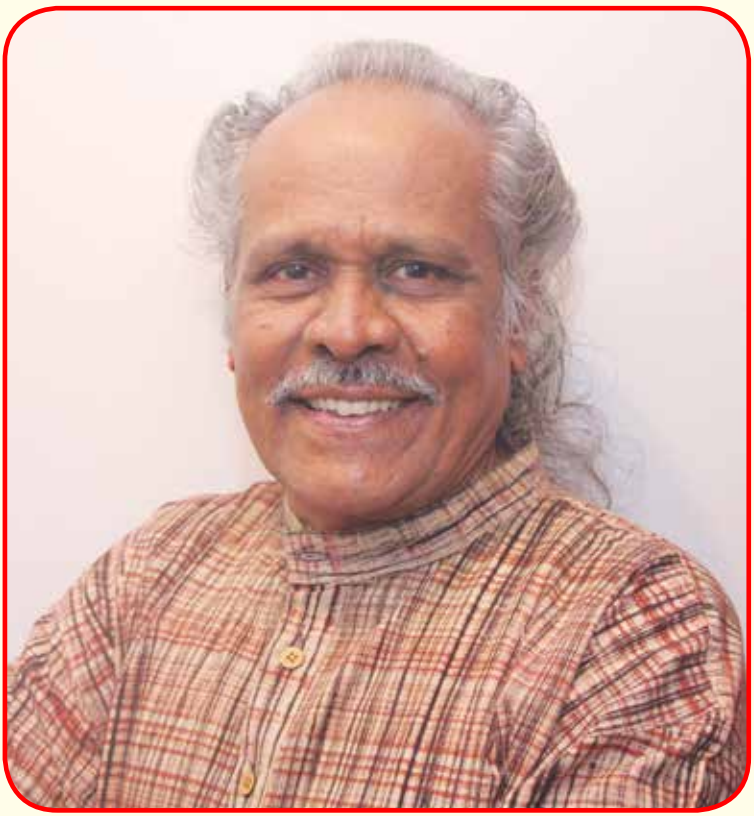
This book is an expression of our gratitude for his outstanding contribution to the Church in India. I am sure this book which includes articles that expand the themes and trends found in his writings based on Gandhian vision of Ahimsa, Satyagraha, Sarvodaya, care for our Ecology, etc will inspire many people to live our Christian commitment much more faithfully.

I pray to the Almighty God to pour his abundant blessings on Dr. A. Pushparajan, and energize him to continue doing the good work that he has been bestowed with.

September 11, 2016

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Prof. Dr. A. Pushparajan

PREFACE

It is with great joy that we the members of the ACPI compose this *Festschrift* or commemorative volume in honour of Prof. A. Pushparajan. He has been one of the founding members of our Association, and continues to participate in its annual seminars and to share his profound knowledge and cultivated wisdom with this and many other academic forums in the country and abroad.

He has produced a voluminous body of literature in both philosophy as well as theology, keeping his Indian Christian identity in mind—something that is of intrinsic value in our Association. He is one of the few laypersons in the Indian Catholic ecclesial world who has provided guidance and exercised positive influence in various national and diocesan commissions.

Pushparajan may best be described as a "Gandhian Christian." His life is a testimony to a unique synthesis of Gandhian wisdom and Christian faith. His life and faith option has enabled him to successfully fulfill the integrated cosmotheandric vision and mission enunciated by Raimon Panikkar, another great luminary in our Indian Christian philosophical "hall of fame."

Pushparajan shares the primal orientation towards the 'theic' or divine dimension of reality that possessed Gandhi. It is this passionate search for the Truth understood ontologically that leads to its obvious but sometimes elusive implication, namely, that at the 'anthropic' or social level, there is a grave need to cultivate harmonious relations with others—whether they subscribe to similar or different identity markers. Combining this incessant Gandhian pursuit of building relations across various

ideational boundaries with the urgings of Vatican II to engage in interreligious dialogue, Pushparajan has spent a large part of his life and scholarly work in cultivating salubrious interreligious relations.

The 'cosmic' empathy which Pushparajan has cultivated has its moorings in the ascetic stances of Gandhi, who challenged the world to live perhaps only a little beyond its needs and to eschew the temptation of consumptive greed, which puts tremendous stress on the environment. At the dusk of his scholarly life, Pushparajan is surely consoled that no less a person than Pope Francis seems to be in sync with the prescient wisdom of Gandhi, as manifested in the former's inspiring encyclical, *Laudato Sí*.

We at the ACPI look upon Prof. Pushparajan as a wisdom figure, and are especially grateful for his socially and spiritually relevant academic output and his efforts in fostering wholesome interreligious relations. We pray that his prodigious research and teaching as well as his wholesome life options may serve to inspire present and future generations of scholars—especially those in the fields of philosophy and religious studies. While we salute his efforts, we join with him in reminding ourselves to respond to the invitation to live life to the full, with and for the rest of the human family (our human home) and the world of nature (our cosmic home), both of which are given to us as precious gifts to be sustained by wisdom and care—the optimal skills of professional and vocational philosophers.

Keith D'Souza, SJ
President, ACPI

FOREWORD

The life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi has fascinated millions of people almost since the beginning of his stay in South Africa. J.J. Doke was but the first in the long line of admirers of Gandhiji and he brought out the first biography of Gandhi in 1908, qualifying Gandhi as the best Christian of that time. Rev. C.F. Andrews followed the footsteps of Gandhi and came to India in 1915 when Gandhi returned to India after his long mission in South Africa for twenty-one years. That line continues without any break. I too am a humble disciple in that unbroken line; so too is my close friend Professor A. Pushparajan along with the authors who have contributed articles to this volume. We all fall in this line with J.J. Doke, C.F. Andrews, Romain Rolland, Loui Fischer, Attenborough, Ben Kingsly, Martin Luther King et al. In fact, most of us have not really tried to understand the 'greatest soul' (*Mahatma*) of last Millennium.

'*Enhancing Our Home: Re-Claiming and Re-Living Gandhian Thought*' is indeed a noble attempt to interpret and apply Gandhi to our times. Though Mahatma Gandhi is a great visionary, he has not systematically worked out his 'World Vision' in the form of a treatise. His life itself was the vision and message to the world. Hence he has stated: 'My life is my message.'

When we glance through the annals of history, we can see many world leaders in the galaxy of intellectuals and socio-religious reformers. Most of them were experts in their own disciplines with partisan outlooks. The uniqueness of Gandhiji is that he had a holistic vision of reality. In the Gandhian vision the physical and metaphysical realities are harmoniously blended.

In the numerous writings of Gandhi we can find the gradual development of his thought, which has been ever dynamic and growing. Hence it is not surprising that we also find Gandhiji changing his views on and often. Hence he admonishes us: '..if there is any difference, divergence and discrepancy among my statements, the latest statement should be taken as my view if you believe in my sanity. For, I am continuously growing in my thoughts and ideas.' His writings are published by the Government of India under the title: *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* from Delhi. These works have exceeded 100 volumes with thousands of pages. Gandhi was a voluminous reader and a prolific writer and an activist person in himself. Hence, Einstein once said: 'Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever walked on earth in flesh and blood.' He was such an unbelievable and mysterious personality.

While analyzing the social problems Gandhiji could clearly see the various causes of social evils. He summarizes them under eight heads: 1) Politics without Principles, 2) Wealth without Work, 3) Commerce without Morality, 4) Education without Character, 5) Pleasure without Conscience, 6) Science without Humanity, 7) Worship without Sacrifice, and 8) Criticism without true knowledge.

Today, the human in society is valued on the basis of 'what he has'; 'what he is' is not of any importance to anyone. This shows that our value system has undergone a thorough change or rather a perversion. Values based on religion, spirituality, morality, etc., are totally discarded in our society. Material and economic welfare has become the only concern for our leaders and people. The values of Truth, Love and Non -Violence have been reduced to some concepts found as if in some fictional stories of olden days. In short, religion is totally losing its grip on the society.

Besides, religions have become sources of division, dissension and discord although they were originally meant to establish peace within oneself, with others and with God. Nay, they have led people to communal riots and even to long-lasting wars. It is paradoxical indeed that the various religions cannot co-exist in peace! Religious fundamentalism and fanaticism have given birth to terrorism on the

basis of religions. In such a situation Gandhian philosophy has become today more relevant. In order to understand Gandhi we should know his basic Religious Philosophy which is the foundation of his thought.

The Religious Philosophy of Gandhi

There is a distinctive character to Gandhiji's idea of religion. Every evening after the prayer meeting he used to discuss problems—social, political, economic, as well as religious—with the members of the prayer-group. Gandhiji sees life as one, without dividing it into water-tight compartments like social, political, economic, moral, religious etc; human being is all of these everywhere and every time. A truly religious person has to be religious everywhere and at all times. Thus, Gandhi's entire conception of life and religion was an integrated one. "Religion must pervade every one of our actions. You must watch my life—how I live, eat, sit, talk, behave in general. The sum total of all of these in me is my religion." That is why he called his religion ethical religion.

Religion and Morality

Gandhi considered a good and moral life as the expression of religion. However, he did not deny or reject the commonly accepted elements of religion, i.e., (1) Creed (2) Cult and (3) Code of conduct. In fact, he was ready to tolerate any creed or religion, even if it is unreasonable, provided it was not immoral. Similarly, he was totally opposed to those religious doctrines which were in conflict with morality. The same holds good with the cult. He did not object to any form of worship which was not immoral. He believed that creed and cult are meant for the promotion of good conduct. If not, they are no good for any religion.

For Gandhiji religion and morality are intimately interrelated. They are inseparably bound to each other. He compared religion and morality to water and seed sown in the soil. The essence of religion is morality. Often he considered them as identical. When morality incarnates itself in a living human, it becomes religion, because it binds, it holds, it sustains him/her in the hours of one's trials. To judge whether a doctrine is religious or not, the criterion he used was morality. He did

not consider a person religious, if s/he violates moral laws. As soon as one loses the moral basis one ceases to be religious, according to Gandhi. Hence he called his faith, 'Ethical Religion.'

Religion and Prayer

He considered prayer an integral part of religion. Prayer purifies and reforms the human for a better life. Therefore, he defined prayer as 'the intense longing of the soul for greater purity.' For him it was the most potent instrument and the greatest weapon for safe-guarding spiritual life. He was convinced that prayer was more indispensable for the soul than food for the body. So if anybody does not pray, his life will be dull and empty and he will not have any inward peace. He was so devoted to prayer that he could well claim that no act of his was done without prayer.

Prayer is the best source for peace with oneself, with the world and with God. In the eternal struggle going on in human heart between the powers of darkness and light, he who has not the sheet anchor of prayer to rely upon will be a victim to the powers of darkness. The man who goes about with the affairs of the world without a prayerful heart, will be miserable, and will also make the world miserable. Apart from its bearing on man's condition after death, prayer has incalculable value for the human in this world of the living. Alfred Tennyson has said: "*More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of*." Prayer is the only means of bringing about peace in our daily life.

Divine Paternity and Human Fraternity

Another basic theme of the religious philosophy of Gandhi is the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of humans. God's paternity and humans' fraternity are the foundations for Gandhiji's social concern and humanitarian activities. We all come from God, our Father. We are marching towards Him as brothers and sisters. It is in this that he finds the fundamental unity of all religions. He went further, however. He wanted to identify not merely with human beings, but with all forms of life. All come from the same God. Thus he extended brotherhood to all living beings.

We are all children of the same Father, whom the Hindu, the Muslim and the Christians know by different names.... The Allah of Islam is the same as the God of the Christians and the Iswara of the Hindus. The little human has tried in his humble way to describe the Mighty God by giving Him attributes, though He is above all attributes—indescribable, inconceivable and immeasurable. Living faith in this God means acceptance of the brotherhood of humankind. It also means equal respect for all religions.

Unity of All Religions

Nobody can deny the fact we are living in a world of religious pluralism or diversity. Underlying this diversity there is oneness. Underneath these many religions there is *one Religion.* There are differences but in the final analysis, these are insignificant. Convinced of this, Gandhiji had great reverence for all religions and admired their noble manifestations. All religions revealed the Eternal Truth (God) and showed man the path of liberation. Only their descriptions varied. If there is religious strife, religionists, and not religions, are responsible. Therefore, he exhorted people to live the religion to which they belonged, in truth and spirit. This in turn will bring about better relations and harmony among religions.

The Mahatma clearly saw the need of the time—respect for one another among the devotees of different religions. What is required is not the dead level of uniformity, but unity in diversity. Religion can be expressed in a variety of forms. The various forms will persist to the end of the time. Wise men will ignore this crust and see the soul beneath the crust. God is one and is identical with Truth. Truth (God) cannot be the exclusive property of any single religion. Different religions are but different flowers of the same garden, or branches of the same tree. However, Gandhiji did not aim at any fusion of religions. He sincerely believed that each religion has something unique to contribute to humankind in its cultural background. To discover the underlying unity in diversity, Gandhiji has a master-key—Truth and Non-violence together with other Ashram (monastic) vows, a person can easily realize the basic unity of all religions. Self-imposed discipline alone can lead one to this realization.

Truth: Search of all Religions

The basic quest of all religions is to seek, find and realize the Eternal Truth. They all share the same Truth (God). Perhaps because of this, Gandhiji said, "All religions of the world are true, more or less." The 'More or less' is because religion as conceived by the human can never be perfect, perfection being the exclusive attribute of God alone. If all faiths outlined by humans are imperfect, the question of comparative merit does not arise, says Gandhiji. All faiths aim at revealing Truth (God). Truth is like the fire at the heart of a many faced jewel. Each angle shows a different aspect and a different colour. Imperfect as we are, we can see Truth only in fragments and act according to our limited vision. The reality is known only to God. Therefore, we must not be like the 'frog in the well' which imagines that the world extends only up to the walls of the well. In other words, we must not think that our religion alone is true and others are all false. A reverent study of other religions would show that they are also true like our own, though all are necessarily imperfect. Therefore, we must extend the same respect to all faiths. When such an attitude becomes the law of life, the conflicts based on religious differences will disappear from the face of the earth.

Equality of All Religions

Just as Gandhi believed in the unity and Truth of all religions, he also believed in the equality of all religions. All religions have the same source, goal and concern. They are all imperfect too. Therefore, they are equal on many grounds. When he says that all religions are true and equal, he does not necessarily mean that 'they are equally true' in religious terms or that they are absolutely true. A person's religion is true for oneself, as much as mine is true for me. We are not to sit on the royal throne and to pass judgment on others. Besides, Gandhiji also believed that God is the author of all religions. Religion is absolutely necessary for humans. In Gandhiji's own words, no man can live without religion. Since all religions have basic unity and they share the same truth they are equal and deserve respect from all. Further, Gandhiji tells that secularism is not denial of religion but equal freedom and respect for all religions.

Convinced of this religious philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Pushparajan has set aside his academic life and religious commitment to the promotion of Inter-Religious Dialogue. He is known as an apostle of Religious Dialogue.

Conclusion

I am extremely happy to write this Foreword for this volume '*Enhancing Our Home: Re-Claiming and Re-Living Gandhian Thought*.' What the Second Vatican Council pointed out in its document on Church's Relation with Non-Christian Religions was taught by Mahatma Gandhi. His thought was very appropriate to a pluralistic world and he has convincingly explained this philosophy to the modern world. The Sacred Council stated that the Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions. What was stated in 1966 was foretold by Gandhi in 1908, when he wrote the '*Hind Swaraj*.' Gandhi was a prophet ahead of time. Therefore, he had to face the fate of any prophet, namely, opposition and assassination. This *Mahatma* deserves our attention, continuous interpretation and updating of his philosophy. This book is an attempt in this line and I wish all the best to the editor and the authors.

Prof. Dr. Antony Chirappanath (Rtd.)
Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala

'INSPIRING' AS THE 'INSPIRATION'
Editorial Introduction

'Most of the people die with their death—and some even before their death—but a few continue to be alive even after their death.' Mahatma Gandhi is one of those few who outlived his life. The *historical* Gandhi, born on 2 October 1869 and died on 30 January 1948, may have died with his death, but even while he was alive he began to be *trans-historical* as the halo of *Mahatma*—'the Great Soul'—was bestowed on him by the people of India for taking the lead in the freedom struggle for India, for strenuously upholding the supreme values of truth and non-violence, peace and harmony, simplicity and detachment, respect for the humans and homeliness with nature, and for being deeply religious in his life.

Gandhiji was an *all-in-one* person—a thinker, a mystic, a politician, a writer, a philosopher, a theologian, an ecologist, a dialogist, an economist, a sociologist, a poet, a mediator, a revolutionary, a pacifist,… Although he was not a highly 'learned' academician—the 'specialists' that our universities produce—he was imbued with a spiritual 'wisdom' that was able to perceive much deeper and wider than all 'learned' knowledge; although he was not a 'founder' of any religion, he was gifted with a *religiosity* that transcends and embraces all the religions; although he did not have any military or economic power, he had the moral-spiritual power to fight against the powerful British empire; although he was mainly responsible for India's independence, he looked for no position in independent India; although he was universally acclaimed as the 'apostle of peace,'

he was not found 'worthy' for the Nobel Peace Prize;[1] although he gave 'life' for Indians, he was given 'death' in return! The person of Gandhi is still a profound mystery! He continues to be alive as he transcends his historical space and time—belonging to every-where and every-when.[2] "A person who does not outlive oneself with one's life of thought, words and actions, is historically...dead! …. Persons of *depth* outlive themselves insofar as they are *alive* beyond the 'time' and 'place' of their life."[3]

Along with this growing world-wide admiration for Gandhi, we also note that there are attempts to glorify Nathuram Godse, the person who shot and killed Gandhiji,—the symbol of a counter-movement that tries to strangle and eradicate the Gandhian message from the face of the earth! A concerted effort is being made, on the one hand, to obliterate Gandhiji as the 'Father of the Nation' and to remove his image from our coins and currency notes, and on the other, to erect temples and statues in honour of that person who gunned down Gandhiji, and to hail him as a hero and martyr! In today's socio-religious market of globalized India, the values that Gandhi stood for do not find any place! In this scenario of the erosion of values, it is heartening to note that there have been persons *inspiring* Gandhian values in society, which is the *inspiration* for this volume that tries to re-claim and to re-live Gandhian thought.

1 The fact that Gandhiji was not given the Nobel Prize for peace keeps on haunting and disturbing those more enlightened, as evident from the number of articles appearing in the newspapers around Gandhi-Jayanti (October 2nd) year after year. Gandhi was not found worthy of this recognition! Perhaps, he could not be contained within such a recognition!…. Does Christ need to be canonized?

2 Gandhiji continues to wield his influence all over the world even more than half a century after his death; the Gandhian message of *satya* and *ahimsa* has found a prominent place in the Moral Books of many countries. He has inspired many political and religious leaders, such as Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Tutu, in their struggle for the freedom of the Blacks. He is revered and respected all over the world, irrespective of religions, races, cultures, etc.

3 Cf., Johnson Puthenpurackal, *Human Existence as Home-Coming: An Approach in Reflective Phenomenology,* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2015), 144-45. It is because of this reason that some persons are vividly and fondly remembered far beyond the time of their life—even centuries after their death—and farther away from the place of their life. Jesus continues to be alive, even after more than 2000 years; Mother Theresa is admired by people of all religions…

I. 'Inspiring' of Gandhian Thought

In the phrase, "Inspiring *of* Gandhian Thought," the genitive used is objective, and thus it refers to 'Gandhian thought' as that which is inspired. Numerous are the persons who have been inspiring the society with Gandhian thought and values; they have been *inspiring* by 'breathing into' (*in* + *spirare*) others what they, through their devoted study, diligent interpretation and prayerful reflection, have inhaled into themselves: Gandhian life and thought! From among the rich array of such Gandhians, the ACPI has planned to focus its attention on Prof. Dr. A. Pushparajan because of his spatio-temporo-relational 'nearness' to it—a contemporary (*time*) Gandhian of our land (*space*) who is closely associated (*relation*) with the ACPI. He has been a faithful and committed member of the ACPI, especially during its infancy period of struggle. Besides, Prof. Pushparajan is well known within academic circles as an erudite scholar of Gandhian thought, and his competence is extended to other related areas such as inter-religious dialogue, socio-political issues, human values, Christian mission and inculturation for our nation, ecological questions, etc.

Unlike many academicians who keep on gathering large amounts of information about some question(s) of their interest—persons with vast 'knowledge'—Pushparajan is a person who has synthesized and synchronized his ***knowing*** with his ***being*** and ***doing***. The vast erudition that he has intellectually gathered is not stored up and confined to his mind; it has become part and parcel of his person that includes his *being* and *doing*. He is so vibrant with Gandhian thought that there is a Gandhian 'touch' in all that he does: in his reflections on theological questions, ecological issues, inter-religious dialogue, etc., and ultimately in his life. It is made possible by the fact that his life and thought are perfectly blended. Let me put it in my own style: his life is a process of existence that embraces *head*, *heart* and *hands*.[4] Authentic existence must involve the total person that includes the

4 I have developed this concept in my philosophical autobiography in the following study: "Towards an Authentic Philosophizing with Head, Heart, Hands: Philosophical Reflection and Autobiography," in *Authentic Existence: A Philosophical Probe*, ed., George Panthanmackel (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2012), 495-519.

dimensions of head, heart and hands that are to be considered in their intentional meaning, and not as the three biological parts of the body. 'Head' stands for that dimension of 'understanding' with conceptual clarity and logical precision. 'Heart' stands for the inner dimension of one's being, one's conviction, whereas the 'hands' are the extensions of the 'within,' by which one gets experience of reality, and one expresses oneself in actions. Authentic existence has to pass through a whole circle: from the existential touch of reality with the 'hands,' through the conceptual clarity of understanding with the 'head,' and personal conviction in the 'heart,' and finally expressing itself with one's 'hands' in concrete actions.[5] The philosophical existence of Pushparajan has been embracing the whole person of his—head, heart, hands—and thus the whole person vibrates a *Gandhian Vision* in his knowing, being and doing.

The ACPI, appreciating the depth and width of the academic commitment of Prof. Pushparajan, one of its pioneers, has decided to honour him with a *Festschrift*. The triple dimension of the ACPI—Indian, Christian, Philosophizing—fits well in the person of Pushparajan. It is very rare that in India a ***lay person*** has succeeded to be a well-known and committed philosopher, theologian and thinker. One cannot but be impressed by the immensity as well as the intensity of his research contributions, most having certain underpinnings of a Gandhian vision which, according to him, has been the key inspiration to live his Christian commitment much more rigorously than otherwise.

II. 'Inspiration' of Gandhian Thought

We take the genitive in this phrase, "Inspiration *of* Gandhian Thought," as subjective; and hence it means that Gandhian thought is that which is inspiring. The 'inspiration' of Gandhian thought made available through many a Gandhian thinker, especially Prof. Pushparajan, has inspired the ACPI to launch the project of gathering and *shaping* the 'inspiration' of Gandhian thought in the form of a book. The present volume is the result of the ACPI's initiative to delve into it. The

5 Johnson Puthenpurackal, "Towards an Authentic Philosophizing," 509.

opportunity of honouring a *Gandhian* is made use of by the ACPI for 'recalling' (*Gedenken*) the great person of Mahatma Gandhi by 'recollecting' (*An-denken*) his thought—something that the ACPI should have done much before!

The '*Inspiration* of Gandhian Thought' is given a 'shape' in this volume, which is adorned with a significant title: *Enhancing Our Home: Re-Reading and Re-Living Gandhian Thought*. After the introductory section that consists of '***Greetings and Blessings***" from VVIPs, a "***Preface***" from ***Dr. Keith D'Souza*** (President, ACPI) and a "***Foreword***" from ***Prof. Dr. Antony Chirappanath*** (M.G. University, Kottayam, Kerala), the main bulk of the book is unevenly divided into seven parts; this division is based on the specific meaning of 'enhancing' in relation to the widening horizons of 'home.' These different dimensions of 'home' have always claimed Gandhiji's attention in his life and thought. Part-I, "***Enlightening Our Inner Home*** (**Thought *as Our Home***)" serves as the foundation of this volume, since the seven studies of this Part deals with the general themes in Gandhian thought. As the title of Part-I suggests, the process of enhancing begins with the *home* of our *thought*; and the inner home of our thought gets enhanced by the process of 'enlightening.' ***Keith D'Souza*** starts the process of enlightening with his study "Interpreting Gandhi, the Skillful Interpreter." It considers as to how Gandhi interprets, how Gandhi is interpreted, and lays bare five perennial values emerging from the interpretation of Gandhi. ***George Panthanmackel*** dwells on the foundational theme in Gandhi, namely, Truth (*Satya*), which is presented in this study as the 'home' for almost all the dimensions of Gandhian thought. Since Gandhian thought is a process of 'homely existence,' ***Divakar Motha*** takes a relevant look at the meaning of 'Being at Home' in Mahatma Gandhi in complementary relation to Francis of Assisi. The two 'hinges' that hold Gandhian thought together are *satya* and *ahimsa*; ***Israel Selvanayagam*** makes a re-view of *ahimsa* with his analytical and critical study. ***Johnson Puthenpurackal*** delves into the non-logical meaning of *a-himsa* beyond the either/or structure by considering the negative prefix '*a-*' in coining the term '*a-himsa*.' The next article by ***George Plathottam*** thinks aloud on the ways and means

of communicating the Gandhian message in the digital era of today, when a concerted effort is being made to destroy the pluralistic and secular character of India that Gandhi stood for. In the concluding study of this section ***George Pattery*** argues that Gandhi in his own way proposed an integral approach to technology (spinning wheel) that could provide us perspectives for our NET age. The various studies in this first part are intended to enhance the inner home of our thought.

As the Philosophical Vision of Mahatma Gandhi is deeply rooted in the 'home' of his *individuality*, this is considered in Part II, "***Accepting Our Individual Home*** (**Individuality *as Our Home***)." Gandhi was an authentic *individual* with moral conviction and religious commitment, and he was enhancing the home of his individuality by *accepting* it with its givenness and possibilities. The first article of this section is carried out by ***Subhash Anand***, who presents Gandhi as a challenge in our search for the realization of our individuality; and he shows that, according to Gandhi, the more we 'hold fast to truth'(*satyagraha*), the more *authentic* we become. Where did the individual self of Gandhiji get the strength? ***Loyola Amalraj***, in the next study, conclusively establishes the Inner Power of Prayer, by referring to his religious teaching and personal life. ***R. Nathan*** dwells, in his article, on the correlation between the *Ṛta* of the individual self and the cosmic self, and on the need to keep the balance between them. This section is concluded with a study by ***D John Chelladurai***, which shows the *advaitic* relation between the individual and society: a relation of *unity* (one implies the other) and of *difference* (one is not the other). Thus the above-referred to four studies emphasize the importance of enhancing the home of our *individuality* by receptively accepting the 'truth' of what we are and by creatively relating ourselves to the Divine, to the Society and to the Cosmos, for which Gandhi was an eminent example.

The home of one's individuality keeps on opening out to the wider horizons of relations: nation, religion, society and cosmos;[6] we thus

6 In the original plan of this *Festschrift*, I had presented 'family' as the immediately wider home after individuality. But since nobody from the writers attempted to dwell on the dimension of family, I was forced to remove that section from the plan of the book.

come to Part-III, "***Enriching Our National Home*** (**Nation *as Our Home***)." An authentic individual belongs to a 'nation'; s/he has a national identity. Gandhiji came to be known to the wider world through his national identity as an Indian. Among the many people who, along with Mahatma Gandhi, contributed towards making the modern India, one stands out very prominently, namely, Ambedkar. Hence, two studies are exclusively devoted to considering Gandhi in relation to Ambedkar. ***George Thadathil*** makes a revaluation of the role of Gandhi in building the Indian nation, seen through the critical lens of Ambedkar's open challenge to Gandhi; the author finds such a critical look necessary for building up a more democratic India. The paper by ***Varghese Manimala*** looks at the contrasting and complementary approaches of Gandhi and Ambedkar in the making of modern India. But due to many factors, Ambedkar's vision of India was not fully implemented. In his article ***Victor Ferrao*** is rather blunt in unveiling the hidden colonial modes of domination in the Hindutva ideology, migrating between Hinduism and Nationalism (*catachresis*), but legitimating its militant *modus operandi*. ***Dominic K. Arputham*** too critiques today's Hindu Fundamentalism, contrasting it against the Gandhian understanding of secularism, according to which all religious values are to be respected, without any privileged position for any religion. The articles in this Part are lamenting over the two evils of *casteism* and *fundamentalism*, because of which the Indian Nation of today is getting ruined.

Gandhiji is best 'at home' in the home of religion; no wonder, the contributors too are found to be more at home in dwelling on this dimension as evident from the eight papers in Part-IV, "***Deepening Our Religious Home*** (**Religion *as Our Home***)." We begin with a study by ***Sekar Sebastin*** on deepening our religious home with the help of a postmodern understanding, which is intended to help religion to be more meaningful, humane and altruistic, rather than institutionalized; Gandhian thought too runs along the same lines. ***Jacob Parappally*** critically looks at the Gandhian vision of religion. The author proposes to have a self-critical approach to one's religious home, suggesting that we need to go beyond Gandhian thought on religion. The next article by ***Francis Gonsalves*** examines the

validity and value of *gharwapasi* in the light of Gandhi's views on religious conversions, and assesses the motives and methods of those indulging in *gharwapasi* activities against the backdrop of Gandhi's views. According to the study by ***James D. Chellappa***, the Christian influence on Gandhi made him who he is. At the same time, Gandhi too has influenced many Christians to rethink and relive the Christian principles more authentically. ***Bp. Lawrence Pius*** positions Gandhi's *Sarvodaya* and the teaching of the Church on the 'Common Good' in contrast to J.S. Mill's 'Utilitarian Principle.' Gandhi seems to have anticipated the Church's social teaching! The next article by ***Soosai Devaraj*** is not directly related to Gandhian thought, but it proposes that the Church be a communion by embracing a non-divisive approach to every other—a truly Gandhian approach! This thought is developed further in the next article by ***J. Maria Antony***. In the multi-religious context of India, only inter-religious dialogue and harmony can help us in our journey to our Spiritual Home. ***James G. Henderson***, in his article, makes an analytical study of Emerson's "*Brahma*" from a literary point of view. Its theme advocates violence as a just means for attaining religious ends, which is challenged by Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent approach. Gandhiji has always been enhancing the home of religion in depth and width, as a result of which he was able to reach a Religion transcending the various religions.

The home of 'society' is a still larger horizon as it embraces the whole humanity; it is considered in Part-V, "***Cherishing Our Social Home*** (**Society *as Our Home***)." This section begins with a reflective study by ***David Fleming*** on the philosophy of education. He observes that the Gandhian approach to truth is dialogical and inter-disciplinary, respecting multiple perspectives, but without falling into postmodern skeptical relativism. In the next article ***B. Joseph Francis*** conclusively shows that Gandhi has always respected the dignity of the person and his freedom, irrespective of caste, colour or creed. In every society the question of *power* plays an important role. The paper by ***Jose D. Maliekal*** dwells on the theme of power in Gandhi's thought in dialectical engagement with the theories of power as emergent in the socio-political philosophies of Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault. ***Michael Amaladoss*** has contributed a theological study relevant to all

modes of society. Basing himself on the documents of the Church he shows that for the growth of any society dialogue is a must, and it has to be based on 'conscience.' This Part is concluded with a study by ***Nishant A. Irudayadason***, journeying with Gandhi in re-articulating his vision of a 'social home' inclusive of people of all strata, status and social standing without discrimination; such a re-visiting of the Gandhian ideal in this Paper is in response to the social exclusion of numerous Indians from the 'human' way of living. Gandhi's social philosophy is the outcome of his personal experience of the deplorable situation of millions of his co-Indians.

The process of enhancing our home reaches its widest climax in the horizon of 'cosmos,' which is given exclusive attention in Part-VI, "***Fostering Our Cosmic Home*** (**Cosmos *as Our Home***)." The first article in this section lays bare the environmental situation of the past, the present and the future by ***S. Ignacimuthu***. The next study by ***Joy Kachappilly*** dwells on the environmental crisis of today and the Gandhian response to it. The Paper contains a powerful plea to emulate Gandhian teachings on the simplicity of life-style by eschewing the unlimited cravings of the humans. The article by ***Henry Jose Kodikuthiyil*** carries this thought further by looking into sources and inspirations from various religious traditions that contributed towards the development of the Gandhian ecological vision. The author finds that the Indian religious and spiritual traditions are highly ecological. ***Nithiya Sagayam*** proposes in his paper a Gandhian solution to ecological problems. If possession and consumption of things more than what one needs is the cause of the depletion of natural resources, voluntary poverty and moderation is the solution! The final article in this section, written by ***V. Clement Joseph***, is a loud reflection on 'enhancing the cosmos: our home!' The Paper proposes a certain dynamics for enhancing the cosmic home: recognize! relate! resurrect! The five studies in this section lay bare, on the one hand the 'darkness' of ecological havoc, and on the other, the 'brightness' of ecological hope in the Gandhian Vision.

The final section of the book, Part-VII, "***Building a Gandhian Home*** (**Prof. Dr. A. Pushparajan**), is devoted to that person in whose

honour this volume is brought out. Hence it is quite fitting that in the first Paper of this Part we let ***Pushparajan*** himself speak from his heart on his life and thought, which he has done in the form of a reflective journey, "***The Journey of My Life and Thought: A Gandhian Road to Christian Commitment***." It is only at certain moments in connection with some peak-events of one's life that one takes a ride back to one's past—how one has been journeying in one's life and thought. Although Pushparajan must have had several peak-moments in his life celebrated with pomp and gaiety, the context of a *Festschrift* being brought out by the ACPI in his honour is a uniquely special moment for him to take a thoughtful glance at his past life and thought. In this autobiographical journey Pushparajan acknowledges his humble beginnings, his moments of struggle, the influence of the Gandhian vision on him, and finally arriving at an integral thinking of Christian Discipleship. Through this paper constituting his reflective journey one can have a glimpse of the 'inner' Prof. Pushparajan. We have included in this section two articles by two different authors: one is appreciative of Pushparajan's philosophical contribution, the other is rather critical; different perspectives contribute towards greater objectivity. The article by ***John Peter Vallabadoss*** dwells on the contribution of Pushparajan towards making India more homely through interreligious dialogue. Gandhi has played a pivotal role in making independent India a 'home' that respects diversity. The author of the article conclusively shows that Pushparajan, inspired by Gandhian ideals, took up the life journey of interreligious interactions, supported by the Vatican conciliar and postconciliar climate in the church. The study by ***S. Lourdunathan*** takes a critical look at the way in which Pushparajan in his studies presents the relevance of Gandhian ideals to address various social concerns. The author tries to indicate fallacies in the arguments developed by Pushparajan to demonstrate his position. From a postmodern perspective we cannot look at these different approaches in terms of them being true or false, but rather as 'readings' from different perspectives. This Part contains Prof. Pushparajan's long ***List of Writings*** and a '***Word of Thanks***.' The concluding Part of the book, thus, begins and ends with reflections from Pushparajan. A ***List of Contributors***, in grateful

acknowledgement of their service, is included in the book; and an ***Index*** is found necessary to make this volume more user-friendly.

* * * * * * *

The Editorial Introduction would be incomplete if we do not give thought to those persons and institutions that encouraged and supported this project. This *Festschrift* in honour of Prof. Dr. A. Pushparajan would not have been born unless it was conceived in the womb of the ACPI during its Annual Seminar of 2015 at Vijnananilayam (Janampet, Eluru). The Editor is grateful to the members of the ACPI and its Executive Committee for having stood by this venture, and especially to ***Dr. Keith D'Souza***, its current President, for his encouraging support and for having written its ***Preface***.

Once it was decided to bring out a *Festschrift*, there was no second thought as to what should be its central theme; it has to be 'Gandhian Thought,' as Pushparajan is a Gandhian in all respects. Thirty-six experts were chosen from among the friends and admirers of Pushparajan as well as ACPI members, to be the writers of the various articles in this volume. Prof. Pushparajan has been very helpful in suggesting the 'right' persons as contributors. These ***contributors*** have been very generous in having placed their vast erudition and fruits of research at the disposal of many an inquiring mind. Many of the writers made themselves experts in Gandhian thought through their determined research and hard work. On behalf of the ACPI, I gratefully acknowledge the intellectual contribution of the contributors—including that of Prof. Chirappanath who wrote the ***Foreword***—towards the realization of this *Festschrift*.

ACPI has been working in close collaboration with ***Asian Trading Corporation*** (Bengaluru) since several years for the publication of its books. We are happy that ATC has agreed to accept the present volume to be co-published by ATC and ACPI. We are grateful to ***National Printers, Bengaluru***, for having printed this book with great care and perfection. I gratefully acknowledge the generous and technical help of my young ***confrères:*** *Sudhakar Yellapu, Antony Joseph Galipothu,* and *Avinash Bitra,* while editing this book and preparing its 'Index.'

Finally, the most important person to be thanked is none other than the one in whose honour this book, *Enhancing Our Home: Re-Reading and Re-Living Gandhian Thought*, is published: ***Prof. Dr. A. Pushparajan.*** By his being a person who, under the inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi, has been '*Enhancing'* his '*Home'* at different levels, Pushparajan has inspired the ACPI to dwell on this theme for this *Festschrift*. Thus his own inspiration is the inspiration for this work, for which we give thanks to him, and for what he has been in his being and thinking as an Indian Christian Philosopher. As we bring out this volume on Gandhian thought, presented in the unique style of 'Enhancing Our Home,' it is our earnest wish that this *Festschrift* turn out to be a humble contribution to Gandhian scholarship, and serve as inspiration for many a people to translate into their lives the Gandhian ideals of truth and nonviolence, tolerance and freedom, peace and harmony, …

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Part - I

Enlightening Our Inner Home

THOUGHT as Our Home

INTERPRETING GANDHI, THE SKILLFUL INTERPRETER

Keith D'Souza, sj

Abstract: *Gandhi was a quintessential existential interpreter. He learned to weave pragmatic and insightful interpretations out of complex social situations, in order to move towards greater personal and collective emancipation. His greatest successes had to do with religious and socio-political interpretation, forging new ways of reading mythical and ritualistic texts, reinterpreting ancient traditions and scouting out new ways of beating hostile and uneven social situations. The first part of the essay highlights some of the major ways in which Gandhi interpreted religious and social realities. The second part illustrates how different individuals and movements have interpreted Gandhi both favourably and critically. The final section of the second part has to do with how Gandhi may be proactively interpreted. Five major aspects of his thought have been offered in terms of perennial wisdom which may be used both diatopically—across cultures—as well as diachronically.*

* * * * * * *

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is one of the most enigmatic personalities in human history.[1] He was not a religious priest or leader, yet is revered as a guru—even more, a *mahatma* or great soul—on account of his spiritual vision and lifestyle. Although he was a Hindu, he incorporated numerous insights and life options from

1 See Sudhir Chandra, "Gandhi: An Impossible Possibility," in *Marx, Gandhi and Modernity,* ed., Akeel Bilgrami (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2014), 282-94. The title of the article itself aptly sums up the enigmatic as well as the idealistic overtones associated with the life and public image of Gandhi.

various religions, most notably, Jainism and Christianity.[2] He was a professional lawyer and not a philosopher, yet his literary corpus now finds a central place in the canon of contemporary Indian philosophy. He was not a typical party politician, yet is widely recognized as one of India's principal freedom fighters, and more so, the 'father of the nation.'[3] He did not have the courage to attempt to overturn the caste system, yet he embraced members of all castes as his brothers and sisters, conferring equal dignity to one and all. He is popularly known as 'the apostle of peace,' yet has never been honoured with the Nobel Peace Prize—or perhaps better stated, the Nobel Peace Committee has not bestowed upon itself the honour of conferring the prize to him, even posthumously.

It is thus difficult to 'essentialize' Gandhi, or to attribute clear and distinct identity categories which may help to easily comprehend his character, life options and achievements.[4] However, one feature that stands out starkly in terms of a character trait was his ability to assiduously seek out and implement the best possible avenues of human action with regard to specific projects with which he was

2 There is also a Muslim influence that is lesser known. According to Bhikhu Parekh, "His mother belonged to the Pranami sect, which combined Hindu and Muslim religious beliefs, gave equal honour to the sacred books of the Vaishnavites and the Koran, and preached religious harmony. Her religious fasts and vows, observed without exception all her life, left an abiding impression on her son." Bhikhu Parekh, *Gandhi: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1.

3 Though aspects of his mature life in India—and to some extent his student life in Britain—are popularly known, what is not as much appreciated are the twenty-one years spent in South Africa, which were instrumental in his experiments with *satyagraha* as a socio-political strategy. In the words of Bhikhu Parekh, "Gandhi had gone to South Africa an insecure, timid, and unsuccessful lawyer. He left it for India in 1914 a self-confident, proud, deeply religious, and well-known political leader." Bhikhu Parekh, *Gandhi: A Very Short Introduction*, 9.

4 This essay is written in honour of Prof. A. Pushparajan, who in many ways similarly shares in this enigmatic but rich personal tapestry: he is a layman, yet lives a life of simplicity and deep spirituality more suited to a priest or Religious; he is a professional philosopher, yet is equally at home in theological and spiritual discourse; he is an ardent Christian, yet has tremendous respect for the religious "other," and has devoted his life to the cause of the betterment of interreligious relations; he is firm and sometimes intransigent in his views, yet is extremely humble and compassionate while relating with people.

engaged. This ability to be gainfully absorbed with the process of *ongoing practical discernment*—the basis of his 'experiments with truth'—may be interpreted as the art of skillful interpretation and adaptation. Gandhi was the quintessential pragmatic hermeneut.

The word 'skillful' generally has positive connotations, implying proficiency in a particular productive practice. But in this context, as the term is used as a qualifier for interpretive activity, it may also bear nuanced or even negative connotations, tacitly implying qualities of shrewdness, tactfulness and careful diplomacy. The meaning I intend when I use the word 'skillful' in the context of the life and mission of Gandhi has to do with one who operates primarily from practical or pragmatic interests. This orientation and programmatic disposition could entail both positive and negative nuances.

The first part of the essay will focus on more descriptive features of Gandhi's productive interpretations manifest in various aspects of his theoretical positions and his practical life options. The second part of the essay deals with the assessment of the thought and life of Gandhi—some affirmative, some critical, some proactive.

1. Gandhi the Skillful Interpreter

There are numerous forms and examples of interpretive strategies that are employed by Gandhi, some more consciously skillful, some less. To begin with, we can visibly see the power of interpretation spelled out in his variegated personal life. While Gandhi did not substantially challenge the old *varna* system, based on the economic and cultural wisdom of the ages—though of course he severely challenged caste-based discrimination—he did not seem to strictly apply the injunctions of *varna* in his own life. In spite of being a *Vaishya* (a member of a traditional trading caste), he decided to venture into a legal career and finally ended up in politics—specializations one would traditionally associate with the *Kshatriya* or administrative caste.[5] Later on in life,

5 In this, he shares the dexterous, pragmatic disposition of the modern Indian, who is ready to shed caste-based occupational identities—often on account of lucrative considerations—in favour of types of work that clearly go beyond what tradition would circumscribe for a particular caste.

though he was married, he began to experiment with living like a *brahmachari*, or more appropriately, adopting a life of self-imposed chastity which one normally associates with the life of a *sannyasi*.

Perhaps the most significant personal and existential reversal, which defined an entirely new way of interpreting reality, took place after the famous train trip in South Africa, in which he was unjustly ousted from a first class compartment at Pietermaritzburg on June 7, 1893, on account of a clearly racial prejudice on the part of a ticket collector. Like many great personalities, such foundational or liminal experiences set the tone for their subsequent interpretation of, and engagement with the larger social world.

1.1. Gandhi the Skillful Religious Interpreter

Gandhi largely adopted an experiential and pragmatic methodology rather than a purely textual or exegetical one, in terms of an interpretive strategy. In this sense he shared similar hermeneutical presuppositions and assumptions with contemporary Western hermeneutical theorists such as Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur. As opposed to influential mainstream and hierarchical religious and scholarly approaches towards sacred scripture, he contended that religious texts "both transcended and were conditioned by time. While their values were eternally valid, the practices they recommended had only a limited validity."[6] It is not surprising therefore that Gandhi asserted that, "I decline to be bound by any interpretation, however learned it may be, if it is repugnant to *reason* or *moral sense*. I do most emphatically repudiate the claim (if they advance any such) of the present *shankaracharyas* and *shastris* to give the correct interpretation of the Hindu scriptures."[7]

Besides being pragmatic, Gandhi also employed an eclectic or syncretic approach towards truth and its social implications. In the words of Bhikhu Parekh,

6 Bhikhu Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform: An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse*, rev. ed. (New Delhi: Sage, 1999), 240-41.

7 Gandhi, *Young India*, October 6, 1921, as quoted in Akeel Bilgrami, "Gandhi's Religion and Its Relation to His Politics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gandhi,* eds., Judith Brown and Anthony Parel (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 95.

> Gandhi sought to combine some of the richest insights of different traditions and to develop an ecumenical view of the world. He exemplified and deepened Gadamer's idea of 'fusion of horizons' and offered an alternative conception of universalism to the post-Enlightenment ethnocentric model of the colonial rulers.[8]

Gandhi was perceived to be enigmatic when it came to interpreting tradition. "The traditionalists knew that even when he upheld a traditional belief or practice, he did so on non-traditional grounds and was a dangerous ally."[9] However, he was not an iconoclast (one who destroys traditional symbolism) but instead an iconomorphist (one who is willing to provide a more refined interpretation of such symbolism). Thus, contrary to Ambedkar, who was not averse to burning Hindu scriptures, as they seemed to abet untouchability, "Gandhi wished to retain the scriptures, but to reinterpret them. Their truth-value was not to be shunned, but like a rough diamond they were to be properly cut and faceted for their light to shine through."[10]

The diverse outcomes of scriptural interpretation and application in the political realm come across very starkly when one considers the contrast between Gandhi's and Tilak's interpretation of the *Gita*. Gandhi lamented that Tilak "has written on the inner meaning of the *Gita*. But I have always felt that he has not understood the age-old spirit of India, has not understood her soul and that is the reason why the nation has come to this pass. Deep down in his heart, he would like us all to be what the Europeans are."[11] While Tilak leaned towards a more politically aggressive interpretation of the Gita, "Gandhi held to the view that the message of the Gita was *ahimsa* or nonviolence: the language of battle was not to be taken literally when contemplating the meaning of *dharma*."[12] For Gandhi, "the language of battle and violence in the *Bhagavad Gita* is to be taken poetically, rather than

8 Bhikhu Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform*, 26.

9 Ibid., 28.

10 Julius Lipner, "Conclusion: A Debate for Our Times," in *Indian Critiques of Gandhi*, ed., Harold Coward (New York: SUNY, 2003), 242.

11 Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 16: 340, http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL016.PDF, accessed on July 8, 2016.

12 Farah Godrej, "Towards a Cosmopolitan Political Thought: The Hermeneutics of Interpreting the Other," *Polity* 41/2 (2009): 144.

literally . . . the battle depicted in the text is meant to represent the battlefield of the human mind, and its struggle to overcome desire with detachment and disciplined action."[13] Gandhi's interpretation of the *Gita* is also clearly in contrast with current Hindu nationalists who interpret the text in order to "emphasize rigid, caste-based hierarchy and violent politics."[14]

One of the most well known aphoristic twists he made concerns the subject-predicate exchange between the metaphysical reality of God and the epistemological absolute of Truth. From a more traditional and personalist understanding of God as being essentially identified with Truth, he proposed a more impersonal and yet more humanely practical position of Truth being identified with God. This is somewhat reminiscent of the Socratic riddle posed in Plato's *Euthyphro*: "Is what is holy holy because the gods approve it, or do they approve it because it is holy?"[15] However, A. Pushparajan provides a simpler and more accurate explanation of this shift:

> In any statement, the subject is the key term that you know about while the predicate states something you do not know. Now, about God, nobody [can] claim to "know" concretely, while all know about [the] truth of life. Even the atheists who reject God cannot reject Truth. For Truth in its primary meaning of *sat* cannot be rejected by anybody.[16]

Hence the aphorism "Truth is God" does not entail that Gandhi seemed to privilege epistemology over metaphysics. It would probably be more correct to affirm that—like Levinas, who wrote in a different context but probably was inspired by similar insights borne of a firsthand experience of power-driven agency which caused tremendous human suffering—Gandhi would prefer to replace

13 Ibid., 150.

14 Ibid., 154. Godrej refers to Meera Nanda, *Breaking the Spell of Dharma and Other Essays* (New Delhi: Three Essays Press, 2002), in which Nanda contrasts this Hindu nationalistic interpretation of the Gita with that by "neo-Gandhians who interpret the *Gita* as nonviolent and anti-hierarchical."

15 Plato, "Euthyphro," in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed., Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 10a.

16 A. Pushparajan, "Trans-Religious Spirituality of Gandhi," in *Jnanadeepa* 7/2 (2004): 37.

metaphysics with ethics as first philosophy. As Gandhi seamlessly linked *satyagraha* (an apparently epistemological concern) with *ahimsa* (an apparently ethical concern) and *dharma* (a religious or moral concern), he seemed to privilege a more dynamic process of doing and acting (proactive becoming) over the more static concept of being and the more abstract process of thinking.

For Gandhi, the term *dharma* represented what may best be described as "sacred secularity"—a Panikkarian neologism[17]—or an integral communion between the realms of the sacred and the secular. In his own life, he demonstrated the possibility of a seamless, interwoven existential fabric of these two dimensions of religious faith with consistent social and lifestyle options. Concomitantly, he attempted to overcome the widespread social dichotomy and even hypocrisy between religious profession and practice on the one hand and anachronistic and unjust social customs on the other.

1.2. Gandhi the Skillful Social Interpreter

It is not strange that Gandhi was elevated in the public consciousness from being a great political leader—a great personality or statesman living in the secular realm—to the status of a "*mahatma*"—a great soul abiding by the sacred realm. The interpretive bridge that he constituted, linking both the secular and the sacred, was made up of a few key principles which became the foundation for both his private and public life. Among these principles, *satya* and *ahimsa* took pride of place: "I try to understand the *spirit* of the various scriptures of the world. I apply the test of '*satya*' (Truth) and '*ahimsa*' (nonviolence) laid down by these very scriptures for their interpretation. I reject what is inconsistent with that test, and I appropriate all that is consistent with it."[18]

However, *ahimsa* does not have to do merely with non-violent acts, or even a negatively expressed 'non'-violent disposition. Gandhi himself understood *ahimsa* in a more positive and far more complex

17 See http://www.raimon-panikkar.org/english/gloss-sacred-secularity.html, accessed on July 15, 2016.

18 Gandhi, *Young India*, August 27, 1925, as quoted in Akeel Bilgrami, "Gandhi's Religion and Its Relation to His Politics," 94.

and rich sense: "In its positive form, *ahimsa* means the largest love, the greatest charity."[19] According to Noel Sheth, "in the Gandhian interpretation, the practice of nonviolence involves a number of virtues, qualities and attitudes or disciplines," including detachment, compassion, humility, acceptance of, and openness to all religions and cultures, and even celibacy.[20] Farah Godrej points out that this richer and broader definition of *ahimsa* "came to be identified with Gandhi's interpretation of dharma . . . The list of vows established at Gandhi's Sabarmati ashram included, for instance, vows of truth, celibacy, control of the palate, non-thieving, non-possession, self-reliance, and fearlessness."[21]

In traditional moral thought, Gandhi's position matches the well-known principle that "the end cannot justify the means." But the stellar insight of Gandhi was to combine the two traditionally contrary moral theories of utilitarianism and deontology. Even though he clearly had ends in mind while engaging in practical and social action, he did not relativize the moral import of specific and singular actions, as one is wont to do according to commonplace utilitarian principles. Instead, he gave value to both noble ends (desired results or outcomes which entailed the greater and common good) and just means (specific, tangible actions involving active and passive agents).

Perhaps the most vexing social issue which Gandhi had to deal with was that of caste. On the one hand, Gandhi seemed to harbour a romantic notion about the ancient origins of the caste system, and indeed wanted to return to a purified form of the *varna* system. On the other hand, though,

Gandhi so radically redefined the four categories of traditional occupations underlying the ancient *varna* system that the latter no longer made sense. His well-rounded or fully moral man engaged in

19 Gandhi, "On *Ahimsa*: Reply to Lala Lajpat Rai," *Modern Review*, October 1916.

20 See Noel Sheth, "The Nonviolence of Mahatma Gandhi," in *Religion, Terrorism and Globalization,* ed., K. K. Kuriakose (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2006), 38-39.

21 Farah Godrej, "Towards a Cosmopolitan Political Thought: The Hermeneutics of Interpreting the Other," 149.

all four activities. He served his fellow-men, fought against untruth and injustice, earned his living and engaged in manual labour. Thus, he belonged to all four *varnas* and hence to none alone.[22]

Gandhi is well known to have purposely taken upon himself the mantle of the "outcaste," and engage in specific tasks associated with this caste. He deftly rechristened this socially marginalized group in terms of a divine class, i.e., *Harijan* (people of God), to denote that while their caste role was menial, their human status was to be esteemed in a socially egalitarian manner.

Though Gandhi's economic philosophy would seem to sit more comfortably with communism than with capitalism—on account of the former's egalitarian, distributive and Spartan nature—he rejected both as inappropriate interpretations or paradigms of human economic productivity. Gandhi's deep spiritual orientation would leave little room for the materialistic and atheistic presuppositions of communism. His suspicion of consumerism—based on a profit and market-oriented mindset—would lead him to treat capitalism with similar contempt. However, he was wise enough to opt for a mid-way position that recognized the need for private property (the basic presupposition of capitalism) as well as the moral obligation to care for marginalized classes of society (the basic orientation of communism). Gandhi's well-known theory of trusteeship "aimed to socialize property without nationalizing it."[23]

Gandhi's interpretive wisdom is also visible in the political sphere. While many of his contemporaries would spontaneously interpret *swaraj* (self-rule) in the narrow sense of independence from the British, in his seminal work, *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi exhibits a much wider and deeper understanding of *swaraj*. For Gandhi,

> India's swaraj was not political independence from the British, but a radical return to her moral roots and what he saw as the values of her traditional civilization. His main concern was not with British rule but with the divisions among Indians that had made this possible from

22 Bhikhu Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform*, 252.

23 Ibid., 304. See a summary of the main features of trusteeship endorsed by Gandhi on p. 305.

> the eighteenth century and with what he interpreted as India's moral crisis, as so many of its leaders in politics and the modern professions seemed to be enslaved to the values of Western civilization and to be intent on creating an Indian version of a Western state.[24]

It is no wonder, then, that for him "civil disobedience" was not a merely civic or political strategy to gain independence, but a radical revision or reinterpretation of one's foundational spiritual and moral principles, aptly summed up by the term *satyagraha*. The term literally means 'holding on to the truth,' but in the case of Gandhi, it had a deeper meaning of being guided or oriented by—or even more, being possessed by—the truth. As in all secular aspects of life, the political sphere too is subject to moral and spiritual considerations, and these in turn are subject to Absolute Reality, one of whose attributes is *satyam* (Truth).

2. Interpreting Gandhi

Just as Gandhi used diverse forms of interpretation in different dimensions of intellectual and social life, so also there are many different schools of thought which have interpreted his ideological preferences, strategic options and social outcomes or results. While the vast majority of humankind would probably think of Gandhi in favourable terms, there are a good number of significant personalities and communities—especially closer home, in India—whose estimations of Gandhi are not as sanguine.[25] In this section we will highlight both positive and negative interpretations or assessments of Gandhi, as well as outline possible avenues of how his inspiration may be taken forward proactively.

2.1. Interpreting Gandhi Affirmatively

Many people the world over have a tremendous admiration for Gandhi. It is doubtful, though, whether many would be equally willing

24 Judith Brown, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gandhi*, eds., Judith Brown and Anthony Parel, 5.

25 See Harold Coward, ed., *Indian Critiques of Gandhi* (New York: SUNY, 2003), for a good representation of individuals and groups in India that have had serious reservations with regard to the ideology and praxis of Gandhi.

to follow consistently in his footsteps. Perhaps the most well known example of an Indian leader attempting to follow Gandhi is Vinoba Bhave, and to a lesser extent, J.P. Narayan. However, the movement of the former soon found itself as "an appendage of the state," while the movement of the latter found itself opposed to the state—and even aligned with strange ideological bedfellows such as the RSS and Jan Sangha. Consequently, these movements seem to have forfeited their right to be truly termed Gandhian.[26]

On the international level, there are numerous examples of leaders who have been inspired by Gandhi, perhaps the most famous being Nelson Mandela in South Africa and Martin Luther King Jr. in the United States of America. Like Gandhi, both of these personalities had to deal with extreme forms of racial discrimination. Of the two, perhaps Mandela shares more similarities on account of the freedom struggles associated with forging a new national identity, even though he was not at first enamoured by the prospect of adopting non-violence as an absolute moral standpoint.[27]

Besides these two great luminaries, there have been numerous socio-political leaders who have adopted Gandhian means to address pressing social issues and problems.[28] In the USA, Dorothy Day was influenced by Gandhi—among other pacifist voices—to adopt various civil right strategies in favour of marginalized groups. She supported the work of Cesar Chavez—another ardent fan of Gandhi—in his struggle to affirm the rights of exploited farm labourers, most from the unorganized and poorly educated Hispanic community. Closer home, the non-violent approach of Aung San Suu Kyi—influenced both by Gandhi and Buddhist pacifism—seems to have finally borne fruit in Myanmar.

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26 See Bhikhu Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform*, 323-25.

27 See David Cortright, *Gandhi and Beyond: Nonviolence for a New Political Age*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2009), 112, where the author points out that, "Nelson Mandela concluded in the early 1960s that armed struggle was necessary to overcome the brutalities of apartheid, although the resistance movement in South Africa ultimately succeeded in the 1980s mostly through nonviolent methods."

28 See Ibid., for a comprehensive coverage of civic and political leaders who were influenced by Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence in some form or the other.

2.2. Interpreting Gandhi Critically

There are a good number of individuals and movements or organizations that have taken up positions clearly in opposition to those adopted by Gandhi. Harold Coward's edited volume, titled *Indian Critiques of Gandhi*, brings out—perhaps more starkly than any other work in this genre—some of the most vexing and controversial issues on which Gandhi had strong adversaries, or at least forces which adopted significantly different interpretations from his.[29]

A good illustration of one of the enigmatic—and hence too often sadly misunderstood—stances of Gandhi is that regarding identity politics within the Hindu community. One of the expected critiques of Gandhi's rechristening of the caste system into an apparently and superficially more salubrious *avatara* would understandably come from the likes of Ambedkar. However, one must keep in mind that Gandhi opposed people like Annie Beasant precisely because of her elitism and her political solution which attempted to restore power "to those most able (in her estimation) . . . [which] meant an appeal to an "India" that was Aryan, Hindu, Brahman, middle class, and educated . . . But whatever else one may say of Gandhi, he was a consummate populist who saw through the inadequacies of Besant's occultist elitism."[30]

Having granted this, it seems that Gandhi was not perceptive or honest or just enough to accept that the caste system was almost irremediably entrenched within the Indian collective consciousness. This seemed to constitute his conspicuous blind spot. His related efforts to purge caste practices of impurities and excesses was thereby not adequate enough to bring about a new spirit of egalitarianism—a spirit more suited to a modern national and constitutional consciousness, as compared to a dictatorial, monarchical or hierarchical consciousness which he himself would abhor. This glaring oversight on his part is equivalent to expecting gender or racial disparities to continue—as they are part of hallowed traditions in different civilizations—but hopefully purged

29 See Harold Coward, ed., *Indian Critiques of Gandhi* (NY: State University of New York, 2003).

30 Julius Lipner, "Conclusion: A Debate for Our Times," 248.

of their excesses in newer and more acceptable forms. This logic does not hold much water from a modern and especially postmodern perspective. If a proper assessment needs to be made of traditional systems and social relations which are perceived to be dysfunctional, it is necessary to get the perspective of the subalterns or marginalized communities which are the most disadvantaged within such social situations.

However, Gandhi's overtures towards the subaltern community within Hinduism were not only undervalued, but even hostilely rejected in favour of more politically and culturally expedient interpretations by members of the Hindu Mahasabha. Savarkar in particular disrespected Gandhi's position on two counts: the advocacy of *ahimsa* as an absolute moral and political standpoint and the adoption of conciliatory attitudes towards non-Hindus. Both of these options of Gandhi did not sit at all well with Savarkar's understanding of *Hindutva*.[31]

The issue of caste is just one of many socio-political issues in which the philosophy and political options of Gandhi found tremendous dissonance with a good number of thinkers and movements. Julius Lipner singles out "the dialectics of nonviolence" as a major factor which drove a wedge between Gandhi and his adversaries: "Gandhi sometimes failed to appreciate that what he regarded as a course of nonviolence could be perceived by others as a form of violence."[32]

2.3. Interpreting Gandhi Proactively

How may we interpret Gandhi in our post-modern and post-secular age? The recipe proposed by Gandhi—his 'Constructive Programme,' laid out in *Hind Swaraj*—if followed in later times and places may prove to be outmoded and effete. To interpret a great leader for subsequent generations, one needs to take care not to merely repeat anachronistically or to follow blindly the dictums or even the life

31 See Ronald Neufeldt, "The Hindu Mahasabha and Gandhi," in *Indian Critiques of Gandhi,* ed., Harold Coward, 134 ff, for a good summary of completely divergent approaches which Savarkar and Gandhi maintained with regard to a wide variety of social and especially religious issues.

32 Julius Lipner, "Conclusion: A Debate for Our Times," 241.

options of the leader in question. In general, it is not easy—if not impossible—for literalist renditions of tradition to be successfully adopted by even the most diehard fundamentalists in later ages. Consequently, as social contexts change in different times and places, individuals and institutions need to use wise principles of discernment in order to continue to be true or faithful followers or disciples of great masters.[33]

It is also important not to create idols or icons of great personalities while they are alive, because this may neither be good for the person concerned nor for the general populace. A significant number of Gandhi's contemporaries—including Nehru, Tagore and Andrews—were alarmed at the transmogrification of their human friend Gandhi into a superhuman *mahatma*, and the incessant temptation towards grandiosity that such a transformation entailed. They were aware that, "the accumulation of power tends to go to one's head, resulting in a form of blindness or worse . . . [leading towards] Gandhi's apparent arbitrariness, his abrupt changes of policy without prior notice, his intransigent attention to his "inner voice" without consulting friends and others."[34] Finally, it may be too much to ask of our 'selfie' generation—a sociological by product of globalized consumptiveness—to become Gandhian in terms of the lifestyle of the later Gandhi, which was highly ascetic.

However, it is not too difficult to see that there are significant aspects of Gandhi's philosophy which are not only attractive and sensible, but increasingly necessary for human survival—and more, personal and social flourishing. What are a few key elements of Gandhi's wisdom that may be held to be universally and even perennially valid, no matter the time and social location one finds oneself within? Speaking on the relevance of Gandhi today, Ramachandra Guha identifies four main aspects of his legacy: the propagation of nonviolence as a method of combating discrimination; his farsighted views on the

33 See Rudolf Heredia, "Interpreting Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34/24, June 12 (1999), for a succinct summary and appraisal of Gandhi's political *magnum opus*.

34 Julius Lipner, "Conclusion: A Debate for Our Times," 250.

environment and advocating restraint with regard to consumption; the value of religious pluralism and his efforts to cultivate harmonious relations with people of different faiths (or not faith at all); and his transparently open life, in contrast to that of most politicians today.[35] We shall elaborate upon these four aspects—in a different order—and add a fifth to this minimal list of the major features of Gandhi's perennial wisdom. These features of Gandhi's thought could well serve as significant interpretive principles for wholesome personal and social wellbeing, for present and future generations.

The primary and perhaps the most recognized feature of Gandhi's thought is his *existential option of non-violence*, and the unstinting belief in the power of non-violence to heal social and political fissures. It does not take much to visualize the quite different sets of social relations that emerge from violent or non-violent means while resolving conflict. According to a recent study comparing nonviolent and violent approaches in solving political conflicts, David Cortright points out that, "nonviolence campaigns were successful 53 percent of the time, compared to a 26 percent success rate when violence was employed. The evidence also showed the success rate of nonviolent campaigns increasing over time."[36] It is hardly surprising when similar results ensue in other forums of interpersonal and inter-community social conflict.

However, non-violence does not entail a meek submission to the oppressive whims and fancies of the "other." Commenting on Gandhi's style of *satyagraha* or non-violent activism, Akeel Bilgrami states,

Gandhi made an art out of refusal and resistance and disobedience. But resistance is not the same as criticism. It can be done with a 'pure heart'. Criticism reflects an impurity of heart, and is easily corrupted to breed hostility and, eventually, violence. With an impure heart you

35 See an interview with Ramachandra Guha at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojdI6I9YqdM, accessed on June 25, 2016.

36 David Cortright, *Gandhi and Beyond: Nonviolence for a New Political Age* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2009), 225. Cortright is referring to the empirical study by Maria Stephen and Erica Chenoweth, "Why Civil Resistance Works," *International Security* 33/1 (2008): 7-44.

could still indulge in non-violent political activism, but that activism would be strategic, merely a means to a political end. In the long run it would, just as surely as violence, land you in a midden.[37]

Political activism is the flip side of political opportunism: both are obsessed by the use and misuse of strong power interests. The wisdom of Gandhi is to avoid both of these extremes and to instead adopt a more refined and humane approach oriented towards interpersonal and inter-community wellbeing. For example, in his "Letter to a Palestinian Student," David Cortright wisely advocates the emergence of a new Palestinian leadership, which needs to "present a new narrative for Palestinian justice and Israeli security. It should forge an alliance with progressive Jews in the United States and Israel, *uniting Palestinians, Israelis, and Americans in a creative new civic coalition*."[38] What seem urgent today are formative civic and political programs that, in the words of Ramin Jahanbegloo, are oriented towards "replacing the notions of 'fundamentalism' and 'nationalism' with that of nonviolence."[39]

A second major Gandhian contribution has to do with *the desire to cultivate healthy interreligious relations*—a desire which may equally well be applied to cultivating healthy intercultural relations. These relations across socio-cultural borders cannot be understood apart from Gandhi's understanding of, and noble obsession with Truth. On this issue, Julius Lipner cautions against an "underlying advaitic impulse" which motivated Gandhi to "submerge if not dissolve difference in a

37 Akeel Bilgrami, "Gandhi's Integrity: The Philosophy behind the Politics," in *Debating Gandhi,* ed., A. Raghuramaraju (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 253-54.

38 David Cortright, *Gandhi and Beyond*, 239; italics mine.

39 Ramin Jahanbegloo, *The Gandhian Moment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 162. In the last Chapter, "Conclusion: Gandhi Today," the author points out to recent developments in Iran as an example of nonviolent public movements and demonstrations which have enabled the country to move towards greater economic and political stability and prosperity (in contrast, one may add, to the Sunni nations all around which are undergoing rather turbulent socio-political situations exacerbated by terrorism and leading to forced mass migration, which in turn will only destabilize the normalcy of other countries and continents like Europe).

more encompassing unity. This can give offense, appearing to belittle valued and perhaps needed markers of identity, and it can readily be perceived as a disempowering rather than an enabling approach."[40] Such an approach may also seem disconcerting in our post-modern world, which has made us aware of how monopolizing tendencies have inclined to overwhelm vulnerable peoples in the name of nation or religion. This is especially dangerous in our contemporary situation in which right-wing movements the world over are tending to dominate minorities by means of various forms of rabid majoritarianism.

However, a helpful distinction in the philosophy of Gandhi, summarily illustrated by A. Pushparajan, proves helpful in providing a richer and more nuanced understanding of a desire to be guided by the Truth in the context of interreligious relations.

> God is the Absolute Truth (AT) …. the Transcendent and the Perfect. That Truth, when revealed to/perceived by human beings, is Relative Truth (RT), because it is seen in relation to the …. perceivers' viewpoints, standpoints, and other factors like the geographic, climatic and cultural …. The task of each religion, therefore, is to remove its own imperfections and go nearer to the AT rather than claiming uniqueness to itself, comparing itself with other RTs, and creating conflict among religions.[41]

A third feature of Gandhi's perennial philosophy also stems from this obsession with the Truth. This feature has to do with *the desire to link self-emancipation with social emancipation*. It is our yearning for the Truth which ideally helps to link our deepest spiritual yearnings with our socio-political obligations. In his excellent introduction to Gandhi's *magnum opus*, *Hind Swaraj*, Anthony Parel points out to "Gandhi's conception of the connection between self-realization (*atmadarshan*) and politics (*rajyaprakaran*). According to Gandhi, the two may not be radically separated. Inner change within the individual ought to be the starting point of outer changes in society."[42]

40 Julius Lipner, "Conclusion: A Debate for Our Times," 255.

41 A. Pushparajan, "Gandhi's Tolerance for Religious Pluralism: A Pointer to a Re-Reading of Jesus' Mission," *Jeevadhara* 46/273 (2016): 63-64.

42 Anthony Parel, ed., *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), lxi.

Parel points out to the work by George Catlin in which the author draws a "comparison between *Hind Swaraj* and the Spiritual Exercises" of St. Ignatius of Loyola, and yet another work by Gerald Heard, in which the latter draws "a comparison between genuine *satyagrahis* and Jesuits trained in intelligence and deep will."[43] These comparisons help to draw out the strong spiritual and social concerns in a typical *satyagrahi*. This position also avoids both the excesses of secularism and fundamentalism—the first pretending that human spiritual yearnings may be wished away, and the second oblivious or disrespectful of the spiritual yearnings of others.

A fourth feature of Gandhi's perennial philosophy is *environmental or ecological sensitivity*. Gandhi is popularly known to have emphasized that, "the Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need but not every man's greed."[44] A. Pushparajan outlines the main features of Gandhian "environmental economics" which have to do with the wise governance of the elements of the earth and of different life forms on our planet. He laments that Gandhi was considered faddish and reactionary when he enunciated his position on excessive consumption and its ill effects on spiritual, social and ecological life. Yet, "The fundamental question is . . . shall we carry on with an unsustainable consumption-pattern that has been followed by the richer countries over the past 200 years, and end up with a widespread destruction of the natural resources and termination of eco-harmony?"[45]

A final feature of human life that human beings would do well to emulate after Gandhi is *the desire to live along the lines of a primal simplicity or innocence*. Like Buddha, Socrates and Jesus, Gandhi too reminds us of this existential vocation towards simplicity and epistemological and ontological truthfulness, i.e., striving for truth at the realms of knowing and being. According to Sudhir Chandra, for Gandhi,

43 Ibid., lxi-lxii. The texts the author refers to are found in George Catlin, *In the Path of Mahatma Gandhi* (Chicago: 1950), 215, and Gerald Heard, "The Hour and the Man," in *Mahatma Gandhi: Essays and Reflections on His Life and Work,* ed. S. Radhakrishnan (London: 1949), 88.

44 A. Pushparajan, "Eco-Harmony and Economic Equity: A Vindication of Gandhian Economics," *Journal of Dharma* 18/4 (1993): 360.

45 Ibid., 363.

> The shortest path between two points is a straight line, the straight line of truth. We fail to see this, inured as we are to the vicious circle of prevarication, hypocrisy, blind self-interest, and the illusory expectation that we could obtain quick results by breaking the irrevocable causal chain that binds ends and means. For himself and for the world around, an impossible simplicity was Gandhi's aim.[46]

In his inimitable style, Gandhi demonstrated how this impossible simplicity could indeed be attained.

Conclusion

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was a skillful, existential and pragmatic interpreter. He developed a clear vision of what life should be for individuals and societies and attempted to live up to this ideal. Even though he was not a professional religious authority, his interpretation of what an integrated spiritual life should be—his "experiments with truth"—enabled him to wield tremendous moral authority. Even though he was not a typical party politician or a cultivated statesman, his interpretation of what true patriotism consisted in—his insightful manifesto of 'Hind Swaraj' and his inclusive and conciliatory approaches—enabled him to wield tremendous political authority.

Perhaps his most valuable contribution to humankind was his attempt to assiduously integrate sacred pursuits and secular interests—both at the individual and collective levels. The proof of his success in both of these domains is that he was called 'mahatma' or great soul—an acknowledgement of great spiritual accomplishment—as well as the 'father of the nation'—an acknowledgement of great political accomplishment.

Present and future generations would do well to follow Gandhi by adopting the five significant facets of authentic human existence pointed out to in the last section: relating nonviolently, respecting the 'other,' linking faith and life, living simply and being truthful. Wherever persons and communities find themselves abiding by these existential options, the seeds sown by this 'apostle of peace'—among a very few other such noble souls in our human history—will have borne much fruit.

46 Sudhir Chandra, "Gandhi: An Impossible Possibility," 294.

TRUTH AS THE DIVINE AND PERMANENT HOME

The Vision of Mahatma Gandhi

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Abstract: *Mahatma Gandhi is known to be anti-colonial agitator, social reformer, religious thinker, prophet and messenger of peace. He brought a form of protest based on ahimsa. He experimented with the abolition of untouchability and revival of handicrafts. He had sincere respect towards all religions. His example has inspired millions all over the world. Thus, Gandhi has made an enduring influence on humanity through his original thinking and action. Truth, for Gandhi, is God. When we put several meanings of Truth in Gandhi, we realize that Truth is the only permanent home of all, which enhances our life supported by religion, which underlies and transcends all religions while harmonizing them. The home of this religion is Truth and non-violence advanced through satyagraha, which means 'holding firm to Truth.' Sarvodaya implies the belief in the essential unity of all things united in Truth. His sense of concern for the welfare of all is revealed in his attitude towards the untouchables, whose lot must be improved through education. The foremost place in a child's education should be given to the teachings of handicrafts, which provide work for the unemployed. Gandhi proposes an economic system that is in accord with the principle of sarvodaya and the spirit of Truth that can further promote participation in political life with moral convictions, which will enhance our life in our common 'ancestral' and eternal home, the divine and permanent home of Truth.*

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Mahatma Gandhi was a man of rare vision and of extraordinary action. "Gandhiji is rightly recognized throughout the world as the greatest personage of India, as the irrepressible champion of her liberties and as the highest embodiment of her genius and spirit."[1] "He refused to preach anything he had not tried."[2] He has made an enduring and long-lasting impact on humanity. He was not an academic philosopher, but a man of original thinking and action. He learnt eternal truths from great thinkers of the world and gave a new orientation to them by applying them in his own way in a particular context. However, there is a metaphysical core which formed the basis of his spiritual life and actions. He oriented all his ideas and actions towards truth. He considered himself a humble seeker of truth and made several experiments with it. Truth forms the basis and goal of Gandhi's life.[3]

Truth, for Gandhi, is an equivalent of the Sanskrit word '*satya*,' which is derived from *sat.* For Upanishadic seekers, *sat* is reality. Reality is that which is the one, spiritual and primordial source of everything. It is a unity that pervades diversity. It is God, the ultimate Reality.[4] Truth, when applied to God, is not primarily epistemological but ontological. *Satya* is a state of Being. Gandhi distinguished between absolute truth and relative truth. Absolute truth is God who alone is really real; while all others are relatively real.[5] There is no proof for absolute truth; it transcends space and time. It is beyond description.

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1 V.S. Azariah, "The Servant of India," in *Mahatma Gandhi: Reflections on His Life and Work,* ed., Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, Eighth Jaico Impression, 1995), 38.

2 E. Stanley Jones, *Mahatma Gandhi: An Interpretation* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1948), 106.

3 D. Mangalath, "Gandhi's Philosophy of Truth," in *Gandhian Spirituality,* ed., Augustine Thottakara (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1992), 77; Daniel Mangalath, *A Challenge and a Promise: Mahatma Gandhi's Philosophy of Man and Life* (Trivandrum: MS Publications, 1996), 37-48.

4 D. Mangalath, "Gandhi's Philosophy of Truth," 78.

5 "This god whom we seek to realize is Truth. Or to put it another way Truth is God. This Truth is not merely the truth we are expected to speak. It is That which alone is, which constitutes the stuff of which all things are made, which subsists by virtue of its own power, which is not supported by anything else but supports everything that exists." Cf. M.K. Gandhi, *Prayer*, Compiled and Edited by Chandrakant Kaji (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishers, 1977; Reprint: 1984), 153.

It is only in the light of the absolute truth that the lesser truths can be understood. No one comprehends it fully; but all can have a glimpse of it, a partial insight into it. Relative truth is not *the Truth*, but one's truth as understood by the individual. Humans cannot have whole truth, and thus to be satisfied with partial truth. It is not only that our perception of truth is relative but we are ourselves relative truths. All the parts together constitute the Whole.[6] In the light of mature reflection and deeper insight Gandhi realized that the statement 'God is truth' is imperfect and the statement 'Truth is God' is a perfect statement.[7] This conversion of 'God is truth' to 'Truth is God' is a significant transition in Gandhi's life and conviction. Gandhi started with God as the subject and said, 'God is truth.'[8] Slowly he realized that the word 'God' was understood differently by different people. His coming in contact with sincere atheists and unbelievers convinced him that the traditional idea of God was subject to very serious doubt. Even those who denied God could not deny 'the necessity and power of truth.' He realized that the sincere atheists are also followers of truth.[9] Absolute truth, which is beyond speech and reason, is experienced by human as the 'inner voice' or conscience. The true voice of conscience is infallible, the result of a rigorous self-discipline and observance of several vows. Purity of heart is essential for the perception of truth. Only a humble person can see the Truth.[10]

In this article, a humble attempt is made to understand the multidimensional meaning of Truth in Gandhi. When we put several meanings of Truth in Gandhi, we realize that Truth is the only permanent home of all. It underlies, penetrates, transforms and unifies all other teachings of Gandhi. Enhancing this permanent home would mean that we enhance the quality of our commitment to Truth.

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6 D. Mangalath, "Gandhi's Philosophy of Truth," 80-81.

7 M.K. Gandhi, *Truth Is God* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1955), 12-15.

8 Ignatius Jesudasan, *Gandhian Theology of Liberation* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1987), 167-70.

9 D. Mangalath, "Gandhi's Philosophy of Truth," 81-82.

10 D. Mangalath, "Gandhi's Philosophy of Truth," 82-83.

1.Truth as the Home of Religion

Truth transcends all particular instances of truth. "There is no higher religion than Truth."[11] Yet, particular instances of truth are necessary in order to understand absolute Truth. Religion, for Gandhi, is that which underlies all religions. "By religion, I do not mean formal religion or customary religion, but that religion which underlies all religions, which brings us face to face with our Maker."[12] It cannot be equated with any particular religion. It transcends all religions while harmonizing them and giving them reality. The following explains what Gandhi means by Religion:

> Let me explain what I mean by religion. It is not the Hindu religion, which I prize above all other religions, but the religion which transcends Hinduism, which changes one's very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the Truth within and which ever purifies. It is the permanent element of human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, known its Maker, and appreciated the true correspondence between the Maker and itself. There is no religion higher than Truth and righteousness. For me personally, religion was my life, how I lived, sat, talked and behaved in general; the sum total of all these in me constituted my religion.[13]

Religion binds humans indissolubly to Truth. It is belief in an ordered government of the universe, the permanent element in human nature which causes the soul to be restless until it rests in Truth or God. As particular truths do not embody the fullness of Truth so particular religions do not embody the fullness of religion. The heart of one particular religion is identical with the heart of another religion. Even as a tree has a single trunk, but with many branches and leaves, so there is one true and perfect religion, which becomes many as it passes through human medium.[14] True religion should help us to

11 K. L. Seshagiri Rao, *Mahatma Gandhi and Comparative Religion* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978), 61.

12 M. K. Gandhi, *My Religion* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing Company, 1955, reprint: 1985), 3.

13 M.L. Gujral, *Thus Spake Bapu or Dialogue between Gandhi's Spirit and the Scribe* (New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1985), 25.

14 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi* (New Delhi: Rupa, 1991), 17-20.

direct our lives to God or Truth, who is our ultimate destiny. If we try to experience God directly, we will not succeed since God is not an object to be found. God is our higher self, and hence we have to purify and better ourselves to find Him. The moment of finding God is an experience of peace, purity, and inner plenitude.[15]

God, for Gandhi, is Truth, Love, ethics, morality, fearlessness, the source of Light and Life, above and beyond, conscience, the atheism of the atheist, the searcher of hearts, transcendent, omniscient, personal, the purest essence, eternal, enduring, patient, the most exacting personage, just, ever forgiving the repentant, the greatest democrat, the greatest tyrant ever known. The following are Gandhi's own description of the attributes of God:

> To me God is Truth and Love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness. God is the source of Light and Life and yet He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist. For in His boundless love God permits the atheist to live. He is the searcher of hearts. He transcends speech and reason. He knows us and our hearts better than we do ourselves. He does not take us at our word for He knows that we often do not mean it, some knowingly and others unknowingly. He is a personal God to those who need His personal presence. He is embodied to those who need His touch. He is the purest essence. He simply *is* to those who have faith. He is all things to all men. He is in us and yet above and beyond us. One may banish the word 'God' from the Congress but one has no power to banish the Thing itself. What is a solemn affirmation, if it is not the same thing as in the name of God? And surely conscience is but a poor and laborious paraphrase of the simple combination of three letters called God. He cannot cease to be because hideous immoralities or inhuman brutalities are committed in His name. He is long suffering. He is patient but He is also terrible. He is the most exacting personage in the world and the world to come. He metes out the same measure to us as we mete out to our neighbours – men and brutes. With Him ignorance is no excuse. And withal He is ever forgiving for He always gives us the chance to repent. He is the greatest democrat the world knows, for He leaves us 'unfettered' to make our own choice between

15 Suman Khanna, *Gandhi and the Good Life* (New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1985), 99.

> evil and good. He is the greatest tyrant ever known, for he often dashes the cup from our lips and under cover of free will leaves us a margin so wholly inadequate as to provide only mirth for Himself at our expense. Therefore it is that Hinduism calls it all His sport – *Lila,* or calls it all an illusion – *Maya*. We are *not.* He alone *is*. And if we will be, we must eternally sing His praise and do His will. Let us dance to the tune of His *bansi* – flute, and all would be well.[16]

2. Truth as the Home of *Ahimsa*

Truth and non-violence are inseparably related. "The more I search after Truth the more I feel it is all-inclusive. Truth is not covered by non-violence. But I often experience that non-violence is included in truth."[17] Non-violence is the expression of Truth in the world of phenomena. Non-violent activity involves no exploitation. An exploiter commits violence by his carelessness in fulfilling one's unjustified desires.[18] The Absolute Truth reveals itself in nature and human as the law of love. Thus, law of love is the expression of Truth. Love is the earthly expression of Truth. To love is to live the Truth. God is Truth and Truth is Love. It is impossible to reach Truth except through Love.[19]

Truth and non-violence are like two sides of the same coin. *Ahimsa* is the means towards the realization of truth. *Ahimsa* and *Satya* are mutually convertible. To practise *ahimsa* is to realize truth and to realize truth is to practise *ahimsa*. The attainment of one involves the realization of the other.[20] "The spirit of non-violence necessarily leads to humility. Non-violence means reliance on God, the Rock of Ages. If we would seek His aid, we must approach Him with a humble and a contrite heart."[21]

16 M.K. Gandhi, *My God* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing Company, 1962, Reprint: 1994), 8-9.

17 M.K. Gandhi, *In Search of the Supreme* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1961), 15.

18 Unto Tähtinen, *Ahimsa: Non-Violence in Indian Tradition* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1976), 118.

19 D. Mangalath, "Gandhi's Philosophy of Truth," 83-84.

20 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi,* 31.

21 Ronald Duncan, (A Selection ed.), *The Writings of Gandhi* (Oxford: Fontana / Collins, 1951, Third Impression: 1983), 66.

To the degree we use the means to that degree we realize the end. Self-realization is Truth-realization or the realization of God. The self within human is at one with the essence of reality, which is Truth or God. Thus, to cause violence on another is to injure God or Truth. To realize God is to see Him in all that lives, and to recognize our oneness with all creation. Non-violence involves not only the negative attitude of freedom from anger and hate but the positive attitude of love for all humans. *Ahimsa* in its negative form involves doing no injury to any living being either physically or mentally. *Ahimsa* in its positive form means love or charity in New Testament. *Ahimsa* means loving even those who hate us. Jesus is the one who manifested *ahimsa* in its perfect form.[22] As he was dying on the Cross, he said: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (Lk 23: 34).

Human's essential self is the imperishable and immortal soul. *Ahimsa* is the power of the soul; it is the soul-force which can be practiced by everyone. Non-violence is the law of our species, whereas violence is the law of the brutes. Any act of injury done from self-interest is doubtless violence.[23] Regarding *ahimsa* as the law of the human species does not mean that it is easy to practice it. The practice of non-violence requires a great deal of self-discipline and courage. It is an activity of the brave and strong and not of the cowards. In addition to courage, the practice of *ahimsa* requires faith in the living God of love combined with deep humility. However, killing may be a moral duty in exceptional circumstances. For instance, if a madman goes about shooting down all, it may be necessary to kill the madman in order to save other innocent lives.[24] It is impossible to sustain one's body without some sort of destruction of other bodies. We destroy plants and animals for food, and we destroy pests for our health. These things are not considered to be immoral or irreligious.[25] *Ahimsa* was his basic creed and was bound up with his quest for Truth. "My love for non-violence is superior to every other thing mundane or supermundane.

22 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 32-34.
23 Ishwara Topa, *Ethos of Non-violence* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1964), 57.
24 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 34-36.
25 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 36.

It is equalled only by my love for truth which is to me synonymous through which ... alone I can see and reach Truth."[26]

3. Truth as the Home of *Satyagraha*

Satyagraha is a direct corollary of Truth. It is the technique of non-violence. *Satyagraha* means holding firm *(agraha*) to Truth (*satya*). Prior to the coining of this term, Gandhi used 'passive resistance' to describe his principle of non-violent action. Two misunderstandings were associated with the expression, 'passive resistance.' First, it was regarded as a weapon of the weak. Secondly, 'passive resistance' was not completely devoid of using violence; the passive resistants often burnt property and used violence when occasions demanded. The term '*Satyagraha*' expressed more clearly his religious and metaphysical beliefs concerning Truth, God, and Soul.[27]

Satyagraha has been variously described. It has been referred to as the weapon of the strong and not of the weak. It is not possible for those who are weak to apply this soul-force. It excludes violence in any form. It resists the will of a tyrant wholeheartedly but never by resorting to hatred or violence. It involves self-sacrifice and the readiness to bear endless suffering bravely. It is exercised by well-trained and well-prepared people, who are devoted to Truth, non-violence and the welfare of all, and who are capable of exercising great patience and forbearance. Such qualities as these reduce the risk of violence. It is grounded in faith in the efficacy of innocent suffering. It is gentle and humble attitude and never associated with anger or malice. It is a complete substitute for violence.[28] *Satyagraha* is further described as an enduring, relentless, dialectical quest for truth.[29] It is holding on to truth come what may. It is capable of being exercised by men, women and children. The purpose of *satyagraha*

26 M.K. Gandhi, *All Men Are Brothers*, Compiled and Edited by Krishna Kripalani (New York: UNESCO, 1969), 96.

27 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 48-50.

28 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 50.

29 For Gandhi, it is through relative truth, by searching for Truth among the relative truths, that absolute Truth can be approached. Cf. J. B. Kripalani, "Gandhi and the Future of World Peace," in *Quest for Gandhi*, ed., G. Ramachandran et al. (New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1970), 241.

is conversion and never coercion, a dialectical quest for truth. It aims at winning over a man by the power of love and gentle persuasion and by arousing in him a sense of justice rather than forcing him to submit out of fear and shame. It makes difference between people and systems. Systems may be evil, but people in themselves are not evil, but good. *Satyagrahis* may hate systems but not the people who are involved with the system. It opens up the way to conversion through a constant appeal to the head and the heart. Reason alone may not arouse a person's sense of justice. A person's sense of justice can be aroused through persuasive reasoning combined with voluntary suffering that melts the heart of the opponent.[30]

Satyagraha requires self-discipline and dedication is required in the quest for Truth. A *satyagrahi* should practice poverty, chastity and obedience. Poverty: A *satyagrahi* should not desire anything for himself which is beyond the reach of the most unfortunate of human beings. He should not make provisions for future. A seeker after Truth should know that his daily bread will be given. Dedicated use of one's body in the service of others is the highest ideal and the most effective means of happiness. We cannot reconcile selfless love and possessions. A person can practice perfect love only if one is totally dispossessed of all things that prevent one from making oneself totally available to others in service. Of course, perfect love is impossible in the realm of empirical existence in the same way as absolute truth and absolute ahimsa are impossible.[31]

Chastity or *Brahmacharya* means conduct conducive to the attainment of Brahman or Truth. *Brahmacharya* involves control of all the senses and not merely sexual control. Realization of Truth through self-gratification is impossible. *Brahmacharya* gives stamina and firmness of purpose by conserving vital energy. But physical control is of no value without mental control. A *brahmacharin* is unaffected by temptation as the marble statue of a man is unaffected by the presence of a beautiful woman. It does not mean that a true *satyagrahi* should shun the company of women. Gandhi's injunction is that a married

30 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 50-51.
31 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 55-56.

couple should act as if they are unmarried, and treat each other as brother and sister. Realization of God is impossible without complete renunciation of the sexual desire. The *brahmacharya* vow is required of those who choose to become *satyagrahis* and not something required of all humans.[32] Besides these, a *satyagrahi* must have infinite patience, firm resolve, singleness of purpose, confidence in Truth or God, all-embracing love, self-control, and rootedness in culture.[33]

4. Truth as the Home of Untouchables

Gandhi's beliefs concerning the nature of Truth and its interrelatedness with *ahimsa* find expression through the techniques of *satyagraha* and *sarvodaya*. His sense of kinship with all humans and his concern for the welfare of all is revealed in his attitude towards the untouchables. The term he uses to describe them is "*Harijans*," the children of God. By the use of this term he is suggesting that untouchables derive from *Brahman* in the same way as the twice-born *Brahmins, kshatriyas, vaisyas*, and the once-born *sudras*. That being the case they are not different from them and are not outcasts. As *Harijans*, they partake of the nature of God or Truth and must be considered one with the rest of humankind.[34]

By taking up the cause of the untouchables, Gandhi was challenging the orthodox teaching concerning caste system. He was questioning the rigidity of caste system. "Untouchability is the sin of the Hindus. They must suffer for it, they must purify themselves, and they must pay the debt they owe to their suppressed brothers and sisters."[35]At the same time, Gandhi defended social divisions in the sense of *varnasramadharma*, i.e., in the sense that there are certain social functions or duties related to one's order or status in society. He approved of a society with functional distinctions based on different

32 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 56-59.

33 Francis Ofosu Quartey, "Gandhian Concept of Non-violence," in *Non-violence and Social Change,* ed., J. S. Mathur et al. (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1977), 39-40.

34 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 80-81.

35 M. K. Gandhi, *The Removal of Untouchability* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing Company, 1954, Reprint: 1959), 108.

abilities of different members. Divisions of the kind are natural in society without any attribute of superiority or inferiority. However, since functional divisions, in the course of time, degenerated into a system of caste harmful to the growth of the nation, Gandhi proclaimed that caste system should be abolished. Gandhi believed that God did not create humans with the badge of superiority and inferiority. There is no scripture that labels humans being inferior or untouchable because of their birth. A view contrary to this amounts to the very denial of God and Truth. To say that God has set one section of society apart as untouchable is nothing short of blasphemy.[36]

5. Truth as the Home of Women

The status of women in traditional Hindu system was that of second-class citizens by laws formulated by men. Men and women cannot be regarded as different in essence. They share the same Truth, the same soul, the same life, and the same basic human feelings. Although men and women complement one another, men have tended to dominate women and women feel that they are inferior to men. Being aware of this, Gandhi worked for the uplift of women. No man has any right to deny a woman her equal status. By denying equal status to woman, man was only degrading himself. The women should be conscious of their own status and should not consider themselves man's plaything. Though Gandhi stood for the equality of the sexes, he was not in favour of equality of occupation. He believed that they are equal, but not identical. Both have their own sphere of action. Man has to look to the maintenance of the family while the wife has the household management.[37]

Gandhi thought it to be a sad reflection on society when it encourages women to forsake their customary duties as custodian of family life to take up duties normally performed by men, such as engaging to defend one's country as soldiers. In fact, the duties involved in maintaining moral standards and a good home in the midst of bad

36 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 80-86.

37 Joseph Thekkinedath, *Love of Neighbour in Mahatma Gandhi* (Alwaye: Pontifical Institute Publications, 1973), 132-34.

social influences require as much courage as those involved in defending one's country.[38]

Women should have the power to rebel against men when needed. They should refuse to be treated as things or objects. They are the nobler sex, personification of self-sacrifice, the embodiment of silent suffering, and the incarnation of *ahimsa*. They have great moral power, courage and endurance than men. They have infinite capacity for love and suffering as their endurance of the pangs of labour in childbirth shows. They have the ability to work more for the cause of *ahimsa* and peace. Women are the natural messengers of the Gospel of ahimsa.[39]

Marriage should be regarded as a sacrament, a spiritual as well as a physical union. Human love is a stepping stone to divine love. It involves not merely sexual satisfaction, but also friendship and companionship. In ideal marriage there is no place for sexual satisfaction; sexual intercourse should take place only when progeny is desired. For Gandhi, the use of contraceptives means condoning vice, undermining the virtues of self-control, and results in self-indulgence. Excessive propagation of children should be stopped through proper education. He also disapproved of arranged marriages on the basis of monetary settlements or dowries, and strongly disapproved of child marriages. Child marriages ought to be abolished. He regarded it as a cruel and disgraceful custom.[40]

Gandhi's attitude to women springs from his basic conviction that we are all one since we share the same atman or soul. The unity of humans is based on the unity of Truth which is God.[41]

6. Truth as the Home of Education

Gandhi believed that education must be based on four important principles:[42] 1. Education must be an activity concerning the whole

38 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 89.
39 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 90.
40 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 91-92.
41 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 94-95.
42 Adi H. Doctor, "Gandhi's Constructive Programme: An Example of Populistic

of human person including one's body. 2. It must be relevant to the context and environment. 3. Schools should be coeducational. 4. It must be at least partly self-supporting and be able to meet a part of one's educational expenses. It must include manual labour and some profit-yielding handicraft.

The foremost place in a child's education should be given to the teachings of handicrafts. Gandhi sees two advantages in learning handicrafts. First, it involves creativity in the sense that something is being produced; second, the sale of handicraft products enables a school to be economically self-supporting once buildings have been provided by the state. It is possible to impart the rudiments of history, geography and mathematics concurrently with the teachings of handicrafts. The basic skills of reading and writing should follow later. The children should not be forced to learn the alphabets and to read books at a tender age. He is not convinced that it is the best way of cultivating intelligence or to build up character. Literary training by itself does not add to one's moral and character building.[43]

Gandhi favoured compulsory primary education for all, including women. Universities, in his view, ought to be self-reliant. Education in art subjects is a sheer waste of time and results in unemployment among the educated classes. The colleges should be attached to different industries which should pay for the training of the graduates they need. English language should be the medium of instruction in higher education in India. He also advocates that school education should be imparted through the medium of mother-tongue. The school should be a natural extension of home. The primary aim of education is to develop the mind and build up the character. He proposes a system of education which meets the needs of the people and is in tune with the religious and ethical ideals within one's own form of life, which he calls Truth.[44]

Pattern of Modernization," in *New Dimensions and Perspectives in Gandhism,* ed., V.T. Patil (New Delhi: Inter-India Publications, 1989), 258.

43 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 97-98.

44 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 99-110.

7. Truth as the Home of Economics

Gandhi was aware of the crushing poverty of the people of India. He wanted to bring God or Truth face to face with people in the form of guarantee of work and bread. He lamented that the advent of imperialism and the growth of capitalism had ravaged the indigenous economy and reduced the bulk of her people to virtual destitution. Conventional economics is premised on the concept of serving one's own self-interest as the best interest without any ethical concern for others. For instance, the conventional economics permits buying cheap and selling costly at high rate.[45] It shows that no truly acceptable economic policy can ignore moral values. Economic policy should provide sufficient work for everyone to be able to feed and clothe oneself and one's family. Nature produces more than enough for human's daily needs and provided everyone takes only what is required, there would be no poverty or starvation. Should anyone seek to possess anything above and beyond one's immediate needs, it could be construed as stolen property and indicative of lack of faith in the providence of God. The rich have an overabundance of worldly goods while millions starve. It is the duty of the rich to engage in dispossession and to dispose of a portion of their property thereby keeping their wealth within moderate limits and a sense of happiness among the poor.[46] The rich should not be forced to relinquish their surplus of the world's goods since that would imply *himsa*, violence. The rich are to be persuaded to part voluntarily with their surplus wealth and riches. The term for voluntary sharing of riches is trusteeship. It means that a human should be allowed to retain his wealth and not be forcibly deprived of it. It is a voluntary form of socialism.[47]

Gandhi distinguishes between capitalism and capitalists. The capitalists are not necessarily exploiters. He appeals to the wealthy to be self-restraint and help the needy by donating their excessive wealth to the poor; the poor are appealed to be non-violent in any campaign of non-cooperation they might engage in to undertake. This concept is

45 Manmohan Choudhuri, *Exploring Gandhi* (New Delhi: The Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1989), 189.
46 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 112-13.
47 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 113-14.

derived from his basic conviction of the unity of all things in God or Truth. Gandhi never believed in doling out in charity to healthy, able-bodied, poor people. Such charity is completely misplaced and simply serves to give the rich donors a false sense of satisfaction. Humans should eat their bread by the sweat of their brow. The same applies to *sannyasins*. They should not think that their spiritual teaching is enough. They have to engage themselves in manual labour. To do no work is not an exercise in renunciation, rather an indication of inertia. He challenged the traditional interpretation of the law of karma that attributed the pitiable and suffering condition of the poor to their actions in their previous lives. His emphasis on bread labour restores among other things the conception of the dignity of labour and the sacramental nature of work through which we identify ourselves with the poor and with the whole of humankind. He sees spinning wheel as a practical method of alleviating the wretchedness and misery of people brought about by famine and enforced idleness caused by alternating periods of drought and flood. Spinning wheel is a way of providing work for the masses who are constantly thrown out of employment. There was a time when the people of India produced their own cloth in the same way as they produced their own food. But with the introduction of imported cloth from England and the construction of textile mills in India, home spinning and weaving tended to disappear. As a consequence the ordinary people suffer from a two-fold loss: the loss of labour that goes into the home production of cloths and the loss of income required to purchase cloths from the mills. Gandhi's conclusion is that the revival of cottage industry would go a long way in removing the poverty and famine of the people.[48]

Hand-spinning is not meant to displace any existing form of industry, nor to oust a person from any remunerative occupation that he might be engaged in. Its main purpose is to harness every single minute of our people for common productive work. The cloths produced in the mills provide work for limited number, whereas hand-spinning gives work to all. *Khadi* serves masses, whereas mill serves classes; *khadi* serves labour, whereas mill exploits labour.[49] Gandhi proposes

48 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 115-18.
49 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 118-19.

an economic system that approximates to the ideal and is in accord with the principle of *sarvodaya* and the spirit of Truth.[50]

Sarvodaya means the welfare of all. It is the economic interpretation of *swaraj.*[51] It is based on trusteeship. Trusteeship is based on a bond between individual human persons, rooted in the essential goodness and trustworthiness of human beings. Gandhi believed that trust begets trust. Our trust in God justifies our trust in human. In a society of trusteeship, there is equality of opportunity for all. The owner of the resources will become a trustee, who holds the assets and resources in the name and welfare of the exploited masses. The concept of trusteeship implies that no individual right can override the right of all individuals to minimum needs. Nobody has the right to monopolize resources to the detriment of the minimum needs of the majority.[52]

Sarvodaya also implies the belief in the essential unity of all things. Human's relationship with the animal kingdom and with the natural world as a whole is also affected by this belief in the essential unity of all things. No violence to animals and no exploitation of nature can be permitted or tolerated. It is because the one universal Truth or Self pervades all things.[53] *Sarvodaya* is basically a spiritual vision rooted in God or Truth. *Sarvodaya* believes more in truth than gold, greater fearlessness than pomp of power and wealth, greater charity than love of self.

> Ours will only then be a truly spiritual nation when we shall show more truth than gold, greater fearlessness than pomp of power and wealth, greater charity than love of self. If we will but clean our houses, our palaces, and temples of the attributes of wealth and show in them the attributes of morality, we can offer battle to any combination of hostile forces without having to carry the burden of a heavy militia. Let us seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and the

50 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 132.

51 George Pattery, *Gandhi, the Believer: An Indian Christian Perspective* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 1996), 62-65.

52 K. Raghavendra Rao, "The Moral Economy of Trusteeship," in *Trusteeship: The Gandhian Alternative,* ed., J.D. Sethi (New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1986), 36.

53 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 64-78.

> irrevocable promise is that everything will be added upon us. These are real economics. May you and I treasure them and enforce them in our daily life.[54]

8. Truth as the Home of Politics

For Gandhi, religion and politics are inseparably related. One cannot talk of one without the other. To talk of leaving religion for politics or politics for religion is incomprehensible to Gandhi. For every activity is governed by one's religious outlook. Religion means participating in politics. To be truly religious means taking an active part in political life. Religion involves all forms of human activity and at the same time provides it with a moral foundation. Religion should pervade all our actions. Religion means not a specific religion like Hinduism, Islam or Christianity, but that which transcends particular religions yet does not displace them. It is that which harmonizes them and gives them reality. Political activity should be concerned with the welfare of humans and nations, and thus it is essential that it should be permeated by religion. Politics permeated by religion means politics dedicated to serve the needs of humanity and such service leads inevitably to a better understanding of Truth. For Gandhi, the Kingdom of heaven, as taught by Christ, is not an eschatological event but something already experienced here and now, a realized eschatology. The kingdom of God is established through political activity in the service of humanity.[55] "For Gandhi a place of service was a place of worship."[56]

In an enlightened state every person must be able to rule oneself, what he calls enlightened anarchy. It means individual's free acceptance of social obligations. In an ideal society, individuals need not be restrained by social laws because life would be self-regulated. But since the ideal is beyond realization in practice, laws are necessary in order that humans might live together in society. The laws of society are a necessary evil.[57]

54 Robert Ellsberg, ed., *Gandhi on Christianity* (New York: Orbis Books, 1955, Reprint: 1995), 19.

55 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 135-37.

56 Margret Chatterjee, *Gandhi's Religious Thought* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 144.

57 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 137-38.

Self-regulation or self-rule is the meaning Gandhi attaches to the Vedic term "*Swaraj*." *Swaraj* or true democracy can never come through untruthful and violent means.[58] *Swaraj* of a people means the sum total of the *swaraj* of individuals. Such *swaraj* comes only from performance by individuals of their duty as citizens. Political self-determination is achieved in exactly the same way as individual self-regulation. National rights are an extension of individual human rights. 'As an individual should regulate one's activities so as not to encroach upon one's neighbour's rights even so a nation should govern itself in such a way as not to usurp the rights of any other nation.'[59] The nation that acquires *swaraj* can never be a menace to the rights of the individuals, nor to the rights of other nations since it is grounded in Truth and ahimsa. Gandhi refers to the *swaraj* of his dream as *purna swaraj* when it is applied to all individuals irrespective of their race, religion or social status. *Purna swaraj* can never be attained by usurping the rights of any community, but by ensuring justice and fair treatment of all. It is *purna* as it ensures the complete rights to all members of the community. There can be no favoured treatment of one section to the detriment of another section, or there can be no unholy alliance with vested interests for the exploitation of the masses. It is true democracy as it provides equal opportunity for all. There can be no true democracy where all opposition is forcibly removed and individual liberty is suppressed. What applies within nation applies also between nations. A self-governing India would not be a threat to other nations of the world. For *swaraj* would involve India at the service of humanity in an obligation to work for the good of all without exploiting other weaker nations.[60]

Is nationalism a threat to internationalism? Gandhi believes that genuine nationalism is in no way a threat to internationalism, but a help for people to come from different nations and agree on a common policy. *Swaraj* for India is not intended to be a barrier for other nations, but a help to be at the service of the whole humanity. To serve one's own nation is not inconsistent with the service of humanity as

58 Mahatma Gandhi, *All Men Are Brothers: Autobiographical Reflections* (New York: Continuum, 1982), 126.

59 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 139.

60 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 139-41.

a whole. Nationalism and *sarvodaya* are like two sides of the same coin, and are not mutually exclusive concepts.[61]

Gandhi approved of many of the motives and ideals of communism. He regarded the communist ideal of a classless society as something worth striving for. He approved of the way Karl Marx sided with the poor and sought to improve their dehumanizing condition. However, Gandhi refused to accept the use of violent methods in obtaining communist ideals. Gandhi advocated voluntary renunciation of riches in favour of the poor and for peaceful persuasion through ahimsa.[62]

Gandhi advocated for a voluntary form of socialism through his doctrine of trusteeship. He believed that a person who consumes more than one needs is robbing the poor.[63] He has not at the same time favoured a socialism acquired by cutting off the prince's head in order to make him equal to the poor. A truly socialist society can only be established by truthful, non-violent means. Truth and ahimsa must incarnate in socialism.[64] Such socialism requires a living faith in God who is the living force. His socialism springs from his belief in the interrelation of Truth and *ahimsa*. It is a form of socialism that would encourage the use of *satyagraha* in order to secure social justice.[65]

For Gandhi, permanent peace is possible when humans know themselves and recognize their essential unity with Truth or God. Permanent peace is possible when humans can renounce imperialistic designs, territorial claims and the use of weapons of destruction. War is an expression of human's greed and the spirit of exploitation. The way of liberation from war is through a bold and unconditional commitment to non-violent methods. Gandhi's belief in the identity of Truth and the real Self of human is reflected in his affirmation of the unity of humankind and in his avowed desire to live in a united world.[66]

61 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 142.
62 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 149-50.
63 Horace Alexander, *Gandhi through Western Eyes* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1984), 179.
64 Mohit Chakrabarthi, *The Gandhian Philosophy of Man* (Delhi: Indus, 1995), 40-41.
65 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 150-51.
66 Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 152.

Conclusion

Mahatma Gandhi worked in three different countries and continents: Britain, South Africa and India. He is widely known to be anti-colonial agitator, social reformer, religious thinker, prophet, and messenger of peace. He brought to the most violent of times a form of protest based on ahimsa and peace. During his political campaigns and struggles he experimented with the abolition of untouchability and revival of handicrafts. Despite being a devout Hindu, he had sincere respect towards all religions of the world. His warnings about individual greed and the moral dangers of modern technology have come back to us in debates related to environmental issues. His example has inspired millions all over the world including rebels and statesmen like Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama and Aung San Suu Kyi. A study conducted of some five dozen democratic nations concluded that in over seventy per cent of cases, authoritarian governments fell because of boycotts, strikes, fasts and other non-violent methods of protest pioneered by Gandhi.[67]

Thus, we can rightly conclude that Gandhi has made an enduring influence on humanity through his original thinking and action. Truth, for Gandhi, is '*satya*' derived from *sat,* which is reality, God. In the light of mature reflection and deeper insight Gandhi realized that the statement 'God is truth' is imperfect and the statement 'Truth is God' is a perfect statement. Absolute truth is experienced by human as 'inner voice' or conscience. When we put several meanings of Truth in Gandhi, we realize that Truth is the only permanent home of all, which enhances our life supported by religion. Religion is that which underlies and transcends all religions while harmonizing them and giving them reality. The home of this religion is Truth and non-violence, inseparably related to each other, advanced through *satyagraha*, which means holding firm to Truth. *Sarvodaya* implies the belief in the essential unity of all things united in Truth. His sense of concern for the welfare of all is revealed in his attitude towards the untouchables, whose lot must be improved through education. The

67 Ramachandra Guha, *Gandhi Before India* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2013), 2-3.

foremost place in a child's education should be given to the teachings of handicrafts, which provide work for the unemployed. A sound economic policy should provide sufficient work for everyone to be able to feed and clothe oneself and one's family. Gandhi proposes an economic system that is in accord with the principle of *sarvodaya* and the spirit of Truth that can further promote participation in political life with deep-rooted moral convictions. These moral convictions will enhance our life in our common 'ancestral' and eternal home, the divine and permanent home of Truth.

'BEING AT HOME'
The Perspectives of Mahatma Gandhi and Francis of Assisi

Divakar Motha, ofmcap[1]

Abstract: *Globalization has shrunk the world into a global village, and yet it has made the space dearer, that led to land-grabbing spree. Consequently many have been rendered rootless and homeless in their own native land and many others are forced to leave the shores of one's soil. Human's authentic existence demands that one is rooted in one's rightful place spatially, socially, mentally, economically, spiritually and culturally. This was strongly felt by Francis of Assisi with regard to the marginalized, ostracized, and the leprosy people, and by Mahatma Gandhi with regard to the indentured Indians in South Africa, and among Indian citizens under Britishraj. The Gospel project Francis proposed and the Swadeshi-swaraj movement that Gandhi headed had led a population to regain its rightful place. By their word and deed they inculcated in the minds of the people the ideology of 'thinking globally and acting locally.' However, they never advocated exclusivity of closed boarders or closed doors, rather a way of being in creative rapport with people, cultures and countries without losing one's esteem for one's soil, culture and products.*

* * * * * * *

1 I take pride in dedicating this article to Dr. Pushparajan, a veteran Gandhian, whose committed service to Gandhian ideology has inspired many an Indian.

Introduction

It is quite true that globalization together with telecommunication has shrunk the world into a global village. Yet, it has also made the space dearer that nothing is as expensive as land. Land-space has almost been exhausted that humans have begun exploring and exploiting the outer space and celestial space, not to mention the cipher space. There is going on a world-wide space grabbing.

Space and time which has been an issue of philosophy, physics and related sciences have now become an economic, cultural and humanitarian issue. The reality of place has taken an alarming dimension especially in the context of the world-wide displacement resulting from war, ethnic violence, famine, natural disaster, ethnic cleansing and overseas employment. As a result, homeliness and possibility of being in one's own home, and being-at-home wherever one finds oneself have been endangered. Hence, humanity is in search of living space, livelihood and safety, more so in our times. Therefore, our era can also be termed 'an era of displacement' and 'an era of dispersion.'

This article deals with the fact of place having deeper significance in every realm of humans than just an occupied space. Reality of place is so important precisely because it forms an integral dimension of any human person. Place where one lives, one works, one belongs, matters much to the wellbeing of any human person. Thus a place that one occupies or belongs to cannot be neutral. It has lots of cultural, psychological, economic, social and spiritual implications. Even things take on new dimension and value, depending on where it is produced and where they are going to be marketed. The two great persons, Francis of Assisi and Mahatma Gandhi, have intuitively perceived this reality, and have envisaged and acted from their respective understanding of place.

I personally believe that their understanding of place can provide some insight into the recent displaced or dispersed population both within native borders and across national borders. It can also sound a clarion call to committed Gandhians and Franciscans to help the

displaced majority to reclaim their rightful space, and help people at large to clarify options regarding their living space, place of work and things they use. This article is not a comparative study of Gandhi and Francis, rather it attempts to unfold the spatial perspective as experienced and envisioned by each of them.

1. Background Facts and Thoughts

1.1. The Scenario of Displacement and Dispersion

The phrase 'Displaced/ Dispersed population' in this paper is used to include those who for many reasons are obliged to move out of their cherished native environment, although strictly speaking it refers to those forced to migrate as refugees, prisoners or slave labourers. According to the UNHCR, there were 59.5 million forcibly displaced people worldwide at the end of 2014, the highest level since World War II, when there were 19.5 million refugees, 1.8 million asylum seekers and 38.2 million internally displaced persons. A person is forced to migrate from one's home because of political persecution or violence, yet did not cross an international border, is commonly called internally displaced person. A displaced person who crosses an international border without permission and enters another country is called an illegal immigrant. Forced migration is also staged because of economically driven projects like dams, highways and the like. Thus there are 'displacement of risk' –mostly conflict-induced or disaster-induced displacements, and 'displacement of adaptation' associated with voluntary resettlement, development-induced and environmentally-induced displacement.[2]

Migrations both trans-national and within the national territory, looked at positively, have played a key role in shaping both the global and the national and/or multi-national communities. Almost every society of specific identity, with the exception of the tribals, is a product of migration.

The recent phenomenon of qualified and skilled persons from developing countries migrating to developed countries seeking

2 "Displaced Person," accessed May 6, 2016, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Displaced_person.

employment is a sort of displacement, which may be called displacement of adaptation. Though this may not involve explicit coercion, yet not without some subtle force where one is compelled to opt to migrate. In such migrations there is a sort of 'pull and push dynamics' at work. At the national level rural population is made to migrate from rural areas to employment intense urban areas. Globally, same phenomenon is experienced as the wider exodus of skilled and educated youth from developing countries, are pushed by the alarming unemployment and underpayment, and pulled by enticing payment of transnational companies. The initial glamour of such transnational employment has also eventually ended up in push-back, exploitation and deception due to oversupplying of human resource and unemployment. But, with the emergence of capitalism, the 'pull' factors become important, when not only the landless, but even landowning peasants are lured away to urban sectors for higher income opportunities.

Though such overseas employments do improve the economic conditions of respective countries and families, yet it is not without certain other adverse effects on society at large.

1.2. Adverse Effects of Migration

According to the neo-Marxist structural interpretations migration is a result of capitalist imperialism, an expression of international inequality, where migrants are made passive actors in a game of labour exchange. They are reduced to the latest raw material to be transported to developed nations from the exploited 'periphery.'[3] They face threats, such as tension between them and host communities, settlement in unsafe or unfit locations, and forced return to unsafe areas.[4] Historically, the mass economic migration was begun and nurtured during the colonialism for labour intensive 'plantation

3 Sarottam Kumar, *Rural Male out on Migration* (Delhi: Vista International Publishing House, 2005).

4 "Advisory Service on the International Humanitarian Law," Accessed July 4, 2016, http://www.internal-displacement.org/assets/publications/2016/201601-training-package-law-and-policy/2-Human-rights-based-approach/Session-2-Handout.-internally-displaced-persons-icrc-eng.pdf.

economy.' As a result, it encouraged and fostered slave trade and indentured labour.[5]

Though the migrants contribute mightily to the local economy and build it up, the attitude of native people to migrant labourers is mostly hostile, partly from fear of the natives losing their job opportunity, and mostly because of their use and throw attitude. In times of boom, migrant labourers are eagerly received mostly to do their menial jobs. In lean and recessional times, they are treated as intruders.[6] They are also exposed to racial resentment, though not often articulated openly, because of their different feature, slang, food habits etc. This resentment also stems from the hosting community's fear of mingling of blood with that of the migrant labourers. Thus racial stereotyping goes deep, and frequently manifests itself in irrational ways.[7] Feminization is another factor in economic migration today. Almost half of the world's migrants today are women, and usually they are at the very bottom of the labour market—as domestic servants, or sex workers—work that exposes them to every kind of hazard at the hands of brutal employers and careless government officials. But wives and mothers who work abroad also contribute to family dysfunction in their home countries.[8]

In this scenario, countries are not anymore nation-states. They have become markets where there is hardly any nation-state control. As markets countries are pliable to the rules of demand and supply of the market pertaining to raw material and labour force, with no one to regulate the market.[9]

1.3. Importance of Place for Human Integrity

Pope Francis in his encyclical '*Laudato Si*' has amply stressed the integral role of place in human existence. The material universe comprising of soil, water, mountain and natural resources conveys

5 The other Face of Globalization," accessed May 30, 2016, http://www.ucanindia.in/news/the-other-face-of-globalization/26157/daily.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.

God's caress. We are so linked to particular places which have an intensely personal meaning, remembrance of which, visiting them do much good to us, offers a chance to recover something of our true selves.[10] He stresses the importance of place of habitation for the indigenous communities. For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space which they need to maintain their identity and values.[11] He underlines that any authentic development and integral improvement in the quality of human life should consider the setting in which people live their lives, since these settings influence the way humans think, feel and act. The environment helps us to express our identity.[12]

The unstable neighbourhoods of mega-cities, the daily experience of overcrowding and social anonymity can create a sense of uprootedness which can breed antisocial elements and violence.[13] Human ecology demands that the unsanitary slums and dangerous tenements be paid attention to and decent housing be offered.[14] Besides, cultural erosion, moral fluidity, disintegration of family bonds, stealthy intrusion of alien trends, subtle imposition of a lifestyle and food habits to the detriment of long proved healthy indigenous living are some of the effects of migrations. Perhaps the worst effect could be the depreciative attitude of the young impressionable minds about anything indigenous, and uncritical appreciation of anything transnational!

2. Gandhi's Home-Coming

2.1. Place as Personally Experienced by Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi, before he entered the public life, left the shores of India twice, first to England and then to South Africa. To England he left for to qualify himself in law, and basically to gain a social status and make a living for himself and his progeny. While in England,

10 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*. accessed on June 9, 2016, http: w2.vaticanva/content/Francesco/en/encyclicals/ documents/papa franciscao 20150524 enciclica-laudato-si.html, No. 84.
11 Ibid., 146.
12 Ibid., 147.
13 Ibid., 149.
14 Ibid. 152.

he experienced a sort of *pull and push* of the European culture. To a certain extent he was combating against the Europeanism from intruding into his inner space. At this level, it was important for him to be like a European and measure up to its culture. Soon he would find himself back in Indian soil only to leave for South Africa, a European colony. Though he was expending his expertise at the service of Indian entrepreneurs, his motive was to carve a space of living for his own family in that new location. He was looking for a niche within the European culture nurtured in that alien soil, where he could be cozy and thriving.

What took place at the Pietermaritsburg Railway station on his way to Pretoria to defend a case made all the difference to him. The space he was trying to thrive in expelled him. He was not acceptable to that European space with all his possible adaptations. Legally, culturally he was well suited to travel in coach meant for Europeans. But ethnically he was an outsider, a stranger, an alien who cannot claim any right to be in that space. He had to be forcefully pushed out, not only on the deserted platform, but also symbolically back to the space where he should belong.[15]

This unfortunate event placed him back to the soil to which he belonged, a space of disrespect, inhumanness, shame, filth, deprivation, impoverishment, exploitation, discrimination and ill-treatment. That was exactly for Gandhi the returning to his core—a home-coming—a moment of entering the space of his mission.

2.2. Experience of Place by Gandhi in the Wider India

Rooted in this soil of solidarity with millions of indentured compatriots, initiated the Satyagraha, a struggle for Truth. It was a struggle of claiming a space for his compatriots who were in search of their livelihood, a space to assert their human dignity, identity, safety, status, respect and a home away from home. While struggling to

15 "Gandhi in South Africa (1893-1914)" Accessed June 18, 2016. http://www.gandhi-manibhavan.org/aboutgandhi/biography_southafrica.htm; "Pietermaritzburg: The Beginning of Gandhi's Odyssey." Accessed June 19, 2016https://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/History/Gandhi/Pieter.html.

ensure a space for the indentured Indians over there in South Africa, he was beckoned by the Indian soil to reclaim his motherland from the clutches of the Britishraj.

When Gandhi reached India, the swadeshi movement that was already started by illustrious persons like Gopal Hari Deshmukh and Dayanand Saraswati and others came handy. As a part of the Indian independence movement, it developed into Indian nationalism involving boycott of British products and reviving domestic products, aiming ultimately to oust the British rulers. *Swadeshi*, as a strategy, was a key focus of Mahatma Gandhi who described it as the soul of *swaraj* (self rule). In the course of time, it got developed as a strategy of non-cooperation with the British in every field, and assumed a new and positive tone of attachment to everything Indian**.** *Swadeshi* soon attained a much more comprehensive character and became a concrete symbol of nationalism.[16]

Gandhi did not limit it to a single point agenda of putting an end to British rule in India. What he wanted to achieve was *Swaraj, Poorna Swaraj* or complete freedom. Although the word *swaraj* means self-rule, Gandhi gave it a content of an integral revolution that encompasses all spheres of life.[17] He was keen at freeing Indian population from economic dependency on external market forces which was sure to make vulnerable the village community. As a result, people will be forced to leave their villages, their land, their crafts and their homesteads only to become cogs in the machine and live in shanty towns. Such migration would only generate rootless and jobless population.[18] He envisioned even prior to the era of Globalization that being in one's soil, in touch with one's culture and making one's nation self-sufficient in every respect should be more ideal than just increasing GDP (Gross Domestic Product) by readily accepting policies imposed on by MNCs and TNCs in their own favour.

16 "Swadeshi Movement, Indian History" Accessed August 04, 2016, http://www.indianetzone.com/26/the_swadeshi_movement_indian_history.htm.

17 M.P. Mathai, "What Swaraj Meant to Gandhi?" accessed May 9, 2016, http://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/swaraj.htm.

18 Sathish kuman, "Gandhi's Swaraj," accessed May 9, 2016, http://caravan.squat.net/ICC-en/Krrs-en/gandhi-econ-en.htm.

Bhoodan movement of Acharya Vinoba Bhave was another movement that highlighted the basic need to have a place of your own. Possessing a land to live, to cultivate in an agrarian society is something integral to human dignity.[19]

Gandhi knew in person and in his struggle for independence the decisive role played by place. Place, as understood by Gandhi, is much more than physical space one occupies, although it is quite important. It will mean besides physical space, social, political, spiritual, economic and cultural milieu. Accordingly things used cannot be just neutral, rather it matters where it is made and profits which strata of society. Economic growth for a nation is very important. But, how it is achieved, where the human and natural resources are used, do make a qualitative difference.

In reference to which strata of society growth of society is reckoned matters a lot. Gandhi would be particular to look at growth and development from the perspective of the *Andyodaya*, the rise of the last. *Sarvodaya*, 'rise of all' would be real only in reference to *Andyodaya*. In the present globalized scenario, our youth working abroad in TNCs and MNCs do bring much wealth to our country. Yet, would it be as valuable as it is earned by being in our native land? Would not it make a qualitative difference, if our country is able to provide ample job opportunities and reward the work of our qualified, skilled population sizably?

3. Place as Personally Experienced by Francis and Advocated to His Brothers

Unlike Gandhi, Francis' experience of displacement was happening in his own native land. His displacement was taking place more from within than from without, although the Assisian space would have accommodated him easily within its fold. But his conversion had the inevitable aspect of 'leaving the world.' Initially it was clearer to him that if he were to live the Gospel project radically, he should physically relocate himself and leave Assisi.

19 "Bhoodan-Gramdan Movement - 50 Years: A Review," accessed August 4, 2016, http://www.mkgandhi.org/vinoba/bhoodan.htm.

We have ample references in his writings as to how he cherished place and space, not in terms of mere area, rather in terms of profundity. Hagiographic tradition too had sufficiently underlined the role played by place and space, physically, spiritually and socially in the vision and mission of Francis. The call of God at the Spoleto Valley commands him to go back to his birth place, if he should know what God wanted him to do.[20] Was it that God could not have spoken to him elsewhere than in his birthplace? Could he not have been commanded to go elsewhere away from familiar place, people and accustomed ways?

Again the voice from the crucifix of San Damiano was about restoring a house, a place. The call came as he was restoring with his hands concretely three such chapels. With the call Francis realized that the command had a wider meaning than just a few ruined chapels.[21]

When speaking about the beginning of his conversion journey, Francis describes God as leading him 'among the leprosy people' (Testament of Francis, 2). He reports in his last testament, using a vocabulary of taste, how he was changed inside out and upside down only when he was led away from his comfort zone of Assisi into the space of the unwanted, abhorred leprosy people. He mentions succinctly of his conversion in terms: 'I left the world.' For Francis leaving the world meant living among those considered to be of little worth, those looked down upon, the poor and the powerless, the sick and the leprosy people relegated to the periphery, outside the wall (Earlier Rule of Francis IX:2). At the same time, Francis was not avoiding Assisi, rather maintained a rapport with Assisi so as to bring to the mind of the Assisians their responsibility towards those ostracized and pushed outside the city wall.[22]

Choice of place mattered much to Francis' Gospel project. That is, living the Gospel project will require where one opts to locate physically, socially, ecclesially and spiritually. It also requires that

20 Marino A. Habig, "Thomas of Celano's Second Book of Legend of St. Francis of Assisi," *Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1983), 365.

21 Ibid., 370.

22 David Flood, *Francis of Assisi and the Franciscan Movement* (Philippines: FIA Contact Publications, 1989), 46-49.

how one is related to a place that one occupies. Gospel person cannot assume a place of domination, superiority and ownership (Earlier Rule of Francis VII: 1). That is, they are not to make any place their own or dispute over them (Earlier Rule of Francis VII: 13), lest they become possessive and resorting to violence. In its stead, Francis advocated itinerancy, living as pilgrims and strangers.

Francis, by not opting for monastery, opted for the 'whole world' as the cloister, a place suited for holiness and salvation (Letter to Entire Order 9).[23] Accordingly, he preached a domestic spirituality according to which one need not go from place to place or from one form of life to another to attain holiness. One can attain holiness and salvation wherever one lives.

Francis' predilection for place is further accentuated by his repeated use of the phrase, 'going among…' He uses it profusely in his writings to mean total involvement to the extent of being touched, transformed and affected by the milieu one is inserted in (Testament of Francis 2; Earlier Rule of Francis XVI: 5; IX: 2).

Finally, Francis cherished Portiuncula, bequeathed by the Benedictines of Mount *Subasio,* most among all other places of his acquaintance (1Cel.108). He wanted that brothers are not to leave Portiuncula, since it was the place where the Lord gave increase of his brotherhood. His wish was honoured by his brothers, and thus it has been regarded as the mother of the Order. This was threatened when Pope Gregory IX declared on April 22, 1230 *Sacro Convento* as the head and mother of the Order.[24] Though it may seem a matter of sentiment, yet, in contrast to *Sacro Convento,* the Basilica of St. Francis of grandeur and pomp, Portiuncula symbolized the Franciscan Order that is rooted in poverty and minority. Surely, it is a matter of concern as to whether they regarded as the mother of the Order an edifice of grandeur or a humble abode of simplicity and poverty.

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23 Marino A. Habig, "Commerce with Lady Poverty," *Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1983), No.63.

24 Teophila Desbonnets, *From Intuition to Institution: The Franciscans* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1987), 69-70.

Thus Francis and Gandhi had learned and lived the spatial aspect of their lives deeply, realizing its consequential effect on everything they did and taught. They chose to live in a space that made them rooted in a soil not just physically but culturally, economically and spiritually. They knew intuitively that the space one chooses to live in cannot be neutral, but something qualitatively decisive. For Francis, one cannot carry out God's command and rebuild God's house for the poor, the needy, the downtrodden unless one 'left the world' of Assisian comfort and affluent zone and lived 'among' them. A space of worth should offer anyone the proximity that can enable one to engage and involve in realities for transformation. As for Gandhi, it was clear to him that as an Indian it is of importance to be in India and for India. An edifice of grandeur and affluence cannot be acceptable that is built on the ruins of one's motherland. Presence of foreign rule in India has to be removed in order that India can rule itself. However, Gandhi was not for nurturing any hatred for the British, rather he insisted that everyone returns to one's rightful place. An elaborate study of Gandhi's commerce will show that any transnational company that wants to collaborate with India should submit itself to the policies of the land, rather than demanding slavish submission to their exploitative policies. Probably, Gandhi will also insist that any business endeavour should safeguard the fertility of the soil and respect the holiness of the motherland. 'Being at home' in the soil of one's origin needs to be upheld especially in our present awareness of the universe being the common home for all. Though everyone has right to live anywhere in the world, one's being rooted in one's space of cultural, spiritual heritage has to be upheld and fostered.

Conclusion

Reference to a place of one's origin is something very integral to any human person, and to any society or people. Depriving one of such basic identity is to deny one the very dignity of oneself. This is not something pertaining only to where one lives, but also what one uses and what strata one occupies in a society or a group. This aspect was totally overlooked or disregarded in the society of Francis of Assisi and that of Mahatma Gandhi, which had led to degradation

of their respective societies. Both, in their respective ways, according to the awareness they had received, had highlighted in stark contrast the alarming state of their societies. Consequently, they have also advocated ways and means of rectifying the situation. They, in a limited way, set on motion movements that would eventually restore human persons and societies to their original dignity of being able to flourish in close proximity with one's native soil, culture, know-how and heritage. However, they desisted from creating a closed system of not having anything to do with others; rather they fostered a system where the indigenous would not be subsumed into or substituted by something foreign. It is our hope and desire that the committed Gandhians and Franciscans venture to play the vanguard in thinking globally and acting locally.

GANDHI'S INTERPRETATION OF AHIMSA
A Re-View

Israel Selvanayagam[1]

Abstract: *Mahatma Gandhi was one of the chief exponents of the ideal of nonviolence (ahimsa). Though originally the idea came from Jainism and spread by the Mauriyan rulers, especially Ashoka, he traced it to the Vedic rishis whom he considered the highest embodiment of religion. While believing in the Hindu scriptures, varnashramadharma, cow protection and idol worship, he claimed that the essence of Hinduim and the Bhagavad Gita is nonviolence. He did not acknowledge the stories of violence in them. Gandhi interpreted ahimsa as the truth-force and soul-force and is indispensable for swaraj. But not all his experiments were successful. He found inspiration from Jesus too. Two writers were consulted for their analysis of Gandhi's ideal of ahimsa. A. Koestler admitted that Gandhi was the soul of India but ignorant of international politics. He cited examples of Gandhi's contradictory stands in the two World Wars. R. Niebuhr pointed out that Gandhi's resistance and non-cooperation to English cotton affected the livelihood of innocent cotton workers in England. For him Gandhi confused non-resistance with non-violent resistance. Without suspecting Gandhi's sincerity he thought that the political efficacy was Gandhi's overarching consideration.*

* * * * * * *

1 I offer this essay as a loving tribute to my good friend and interfaith dialogue partner Dr. A. Pushparajan who did a remarkable study of Gandhi with reference to conversion. I cherish the memory of our long journeys together and spirited dialogues on dialogue.

1. Background

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948), a lawyer from the state of Gujarat in northern India, campaigner of racial justice in South Africa, brave spokesperson for India's independence from Britain, martyr of a right wing fundamentalism of his own Hindu religion of which he was openly apologetic, came to be called man of truth, great-soul (*Mahatma*) and divine incarnation (*avatar*). It is often claimed that he had rock-like integrity but on certain issues he was enigmatic if not prejudiced or ignorant. While uncritical appreciation for Gandhi has been aired consistently, particularly in the western world, questions have been raised about such appreciation.[2] In this paper, I shall revisit the ideal of *ahimsa* (non-injury, non-harming, non-cruelty or non-violence) with special reference to Gandhi's interpretation and experiments as he has been known as one of the best exponents of this ideal in the world.

There are too many pieces of writings by Gandhi on violence with overlap, and even collections lack systematic presentation. However, we have sufficient sources to reconstruct his vision of life without violence. They are in the forms of exposition and stories of experiment; they usually contain references to Hindu scriptures. Also Gandhi is placed along with some reflective world leaders who made considered response to Gandhi's ahimsa. We need to raise questions about violence in relation to unjust invasions and intrusions and responses thereto, noting the tensions, dilemmas and uncertainties in practicing such an ideal. We will also identify in the Indian context what may be called 'systemic violence' which are tinderboxes perpetuating violence. Caste system, Hindi imposition and dietary restriction of beef are the most burning issues with ramifications that instigate violence. Finally we will point out some pertinent issues for further study and discussion.

2 For a general assessment of Thomas Merton's appreciation of Gandhi's ideals of truth, social integration and non-violence, see I. Selvanayagam, "Gandhi on Non-Violence: Does Merton's Appreciation Have any Appeal today?" *The Merton Journal*, Eastertide, 14/1, (2007), 2-14; "The Tension between the Ideal of Non-Violence and Actual Practice: Gandhi in Context," *Current Dialogue,* No. 49, (July 2007), 28-37.

2. Religious Streams That Nurtured Ahimsa

Though there is lack of evidence for ascertaining the origin of the idea of ahimsa, Gandhi claimed that the ancient *Ṛsis* discovered it and that they were greater than Newton and Wellington. But it is doubtful that the Vedic *Ṛsis*, the visionaries of ritual sacrifice, did discover it; in fact it is more convincing to argue that it was introduced by the counter-cultural *sramanas* (renouncers), particularly Jainas and Buddhists. The order of the complex Vedic sacrifice was in correspondence to the *varna*-based social stratification and the cosmic order. Killing animals was the central act in most sacrifices. The founder of Jainism, Rishaba, is remembered as having emphasized ahimsa in his protest against the slaughter of animals in sacrifice. It is recorded that Mahavira and his disciples routinely entered sacrificial halls, preached the new doctrine and converted Brahmins. They explained that just as one binds an animal to a sacrificial pole so also he is bound to karma. The Jains are strict not to kill even an insect. It is held that vegetarianism was originally their discipline but their interior sacrifice through hard austere practices appeared to be a form of ahimsa to the Buddha and his disciples. The Buddhists followed the missionary pattern of the Jains, and engaged in public dialogues like them. For example, while a rich Brahmin was ready to sacrifice with hundreds of animals, Buddha told the story of a great person performing simple ritual with vegetable and the great merit of it. The Brahmin was convinced and he hosted a dinner at the sacrificial pit.[3]

It was through the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka of the third century BCE, a convert to Buddhism, that ahimsa was propagated so widely. He had become remorseful at the sight of the dead bodies in the Kalinga battlefield, and there are hints here and there in the two epics of his influence in this. For example, after the end of the Mahabharata war, the sage Brihaspati comes to the bedside of Bhishma with arrows all over his body and makes the following pronouncements in the hearing of Yudhisthira and his Pandava brothers: 'Nothing is more virtuous than compassion,' and 'Never should a man do to another what he would not want another to do to him.' Then he ascends to the sky

3 See, I. Selvanayagam, *Vedic Sacrifice: Challenge and Response,* (Delhi: Manohar, 1996), 150.

above the bed of arrows. Bhishma now tells Yudhisthira, 'Nothing is greater than Ahimsa.'[4] Subsequently Yudhisthira praised ahimsa and wanted to resign from ruling as a king as it would involve violence.

It is in this background that one should understand Arjuna's despondence and questions in the battlefield and it has been suggested that Ashoka and Arjuna were counter-figures in the field of dharma.[5] The persistence of violence and the challenge of the principle of non-violence created dilemmas and conflicts as is evident in the epics. Caste-violence is most glaring. For example, in the Ramayana (7: 64-67) we read a horrible story. Rama, an *avatar* and embodiment of righteousness (Gandhi's deity of personal favour), intolerant to any critical questions to traditional religion and violently protected the caste rule when he killed Shambuka, a Shudra who dared to practice tapas with a view to become a god and win the heavenly world, chopping his head by his sword while the victim was still telling his story. More painfully, according to the full story, Rama did it in order to bring a Brahmin child to life as the Brahman had complained that Rama was failing to maintain dharma. When one has the mixture of such stories along with the virtue of non-violence, it was left to the Hindu law givers such as Manu to distinguish between killing in general and killing in accordance with the caste-based dharma. It has not been easy for readers of the above texts to form a clear opinion about ahimsa.

Gandhi was proud to claim that even after reasoned consideration of religions, 'Hinduism with its message of Ahimsa is to me the most glorious religion in the world.'[6] Gandhi thought that all superstitions need to be purged of Hinduism though he did not name them, nor suggest a way for it, though there are many texts which he rejected. He was selective of the fundamentals as the following affirmation makes clear: 'I call myself a Sanatana Hindu because 1) I believe

4 Cited by Rajmohan Gandhi, *Revenge & Reconciliation: Understanding South Asian History* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1999), 14.

5 See, I. Selvanayagam, "Asoka and Arjuna as Counterfigures Standing on the Field of Dharma: A Historical-Hermeneutical Perspective," *History of Religions*, (Aug., 1992), 59-75.

6 Gandhi, *The Way*, quoted by Boyd H. Wilson, "Ultimacy as Unifier in Gandhi," in *Religion in Modern India*, ed., Robert Baird (Delhi: Manohar, 1981), 229.

in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas and all that goes in the name of Hindu scriptures, and therefore in *avataras* and rebirth, 2) I believe in the *Varnashramadharma* in a sense in my opinion strictly Vedic but not in its present popular and crude sense, 3) I believe in the protection of the cow in its much larger sense than the popular, 4) I do not disbelieve in idol worship.[7]

In a preceding section, in response to his religio-ideological opponent B.R. Ambedkar (1891-1956) he admits that he does not know the origin of caste and whether it is helpful to both spiritual and national growth. But he still asserted that varnashrama-dharma has nothing to do with the caste.

> The law of varna teaches that each one of us should earn our bread by following the ancestral calling. It defines not our rights but our duties…All are good, lawful and absolutely equal in status. The calling of a Brahmana—spiritual teacher—and a scavenger are equal and their due performance carries equal merit before God and at one time seems to have carried identical reward before man. Both were entitled to their livelihood and no more.[8]

While Gandhi did not refer to any scriptural passage that proclaims the Brahmin-scavenger equality, in response to Ambedkar who quoted scriptural texts to demonstrate the contrary, Gandhi said that Ambedkar had picked up 'texts of doubtful authenticity' but without naming them. It is doubtful that Gandhi read the scriptures fully when he made a distinction between the *śṛti* ('heard,' the primary scriptures of the four Vedas including the Upanishads) and the *smṛti* ('remembered' secondary scriptures including the sutras and shastras, epics and puranas). Ironically the primary scriptures mention *varna* (the prototype of caste, caste-hierarchy and untouchability as pointed out by scholars), the *Varnashramadharma* (rules and regulations for four stages of life and four castes, a system which was worked out in response to the challenges of the *sramanas*, renouncers).

When Gandhi became acquainted with the Bhagavad Gita (by an English translation) he projected it as the most authentic Hindu Bible

7 M.K. Gandhi, *The Essence of Hinduism* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publication House, 1987).

8 Ibid., 12f.

and translated it into Gujarati. His excitement about this concise and clear text is evident when he said: "The Gita is the universal mother. She turns away nobody. Her door is wide open to anyone who knocks. A true votary of the Gita does not know what disappointment is. He ever dwells in perennial joy and peace that passes understanding."[9]

Gandhi believed that 'in trying to enforce in one's life the central teaching of the Gita, one is bound to follow truth and ahimsa. When there is no desire for fruit, there is no temptation for untruth or himsa, because in any instance of violence there is desire to attain the cherished end. 'But it may be freely admitted that the Gita was not written to establish Ahimsa. It was an accepted and primary duty even before the Gita age. The Gita had to deliver the message of renunciation of fruit…But if the Gita believed in Ahimsa or it was included in desirelessness, why did the author take a war-like illustration? When the Gita was written, although people believed in Ahimsa, wars were not only not taboo, but nobody observed the contradiction between them and Ahimsa.'[10]

Here a few comments on Gandhi's approach to and interpretation of the Gita are in order. Of course Gandhi did not care to find out the context in which its attempt to synthesize the explosive movements and the great moment of brahmana-bhagavata amalgamation. This has been acknowledged by Hindu scholars such as S. Radhakrishnan. The Bharata war in which the message of the Gita is pitched was interpreted by Gandhi as an allegory of the perennial conflict going on in every human being between good and evil. He was not the only one to take this interpretation which was originally presented by the theosophists. But this goes against authors like Manu and Ramanuja who wanted killing in Brahmanic sacrifice and in the war of a warrior to be exempted from killing in general.

Further, Gandhi did not highlight Krishna's declaration that he had created the four castes and caste duty including ritual sacrifice as very important for the maintenance of the dharmic universe. In this connection, Krishna says that ritual sacrifice (*yajña*) should not be

9 Ibid., 132.
10 Ibid., 143.

given up even at the stage of *sannyāsa* though some sutra writers were liberal in this matter. Also in response to Arjuna's assessment of the futility and horror of killing in war, echoing the Buddhist and Jaina emphasis, Krishna justifies it by explaining the invulnerability and transmigration of the soul. Doing a warrior's duty without worrying about its consequences is the Gita's message and Gandhi transposed this to mean action without desiring the fruits thereof. In fact, the central problem that the Gita deals with is not desire (*kama*) but delusion (*moha*) of which Arjuna finally says at the end he was cleared. However, what Gandhi missed is the near success of a profound synthesis and the edge of an inclusive bhakti. Later commentators have elaborated this synthesis: having fixed your mind (*jñāna*) in God (*bhakti*), do your duty (*karma*) without attachment to its fruit. Of course, there are problems of this synthesis within the text.[11]

The greatest paradigm that transcended the yajña-centred and caste-based *sanatana dharma* including the *varnashrama-dharma* was bhakti in God or his avatar. At a poignant moment Krishna says:

> Whoever offers Me with devotion, a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, I accept that, the pious offering of the pure in heart. Whatever you do… do it as an offering to me. Thus shall you be free from the bondage of actions yielding good and bad results. With the mind firmly set in the yoga of renunciation and liberated, you shall come to Me. I am the same to all beings; to Me there is none hateful, none dear. But those who worship Me with devotion, they are in Me and I also am in them. Even if a man of the most sinful conduct worships Me with undeviating devotion, he must be reckoned as righteous, for he has rightly resolved. Soon does he become a man of righteousness and obtains lasting peace…My devotee never perishes. For those who take refuge in Me…though they be of inferior birth–women, Vaisyas and Sudras–even they attain the Supreme Goal.[12]

11 For the summary of a study, see, I. Selvanayagam, *Vedic Sacrifice: Challenge and Response* (Delhi: Manohar, 1996), 279-95.

12 *The Bhagavad Gita*, 9: 26-32; transl., Swami Chidbhavananda (Tirupparaithurai: Sri Ramakrishna Tapovanam, 1986).

Finally, it is interesting that Gandhi said that the Gita, as the universal mother, turns away nobody, her door being wide open to anyone who knocks and a true votary of the Gita does not know what disappointment is, but ever dwells in perennial joy and peace that passes understanding. He seems to have adopted phrases from the New Testament. But after pronouncing the supreme verse of 'renounce all dharmas and take refuge in Me alone. I shall liberate you from all sins; grieve not' Krishna warns: 'This is never to be spoken by you to one who is devoid of austerities, nor to one who is not devoted, nor to one who does not do service, nor to one who speaks ill of Me' (18: 67). This has baffled scholars but it is not only here but also in other Hindu bhakti traditions where the explosion of divine grace and love is checked by insisting the qualification of the soul to receive it.

Gandhi's insistence that ahimsa is the essence of the Gita lacks exegesis. In fact only in four places does the word ahimsa occur along with the other virtues (13: 7: 16: 1-3: 17: 14). Such selection of a few verses or ideas from the scripture and the construction of a philosophy or theology is common to all religions. This is done mostly by fundamentalist groups. Though Gandhi's approach was positive and healthy, his style of selection of scripture and verses of that scripture is not far different from the above. Is it valid to say ahimsa is the essence of the Gita and of Hinduism on the basis of its occurrence in passing in four places as a virtue along with several others? It is not without reason that Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920), an early contemporary of Gandhi, a militant nationalist, wrote a detailed commentary on the Gita[13] in which he claimed to capture the central message of the Gita, i.e., 'fight and kill in order to restore the eternal dharma from the foreign forces.' But he did not ignore the scanty occurrence of 'ahimsa,' which he translated 'harmlessness.' Possibly Gandhi's assassin was influenced by Tilak's interpretation as he appeared to be giving concessions to the enemies. From a scholarly viewpoint Tilak's interpretation of the Gita was more authentic and convincing. However, today while the Hindutva movement more or less follows Tilak's line of thinking, their political representatives

13 B.G. Tilak, *Srimad Bhagavadgita Rahasya or Karma-Yoga-Sastra* (Bombay: Vaibhava Press, 1935), 2 vols.

in the government add the Gandhian view of 'forcing' the Gita into every Indian's hands and asking them to accept it as India's national scripture. Massive illiteracy and ignorance seems to be their greatest advantage.

3. Theoretical Exposition

We have already noted the negative and positive aspects of ahimsa in Gandhi's thought, and how these relate to our fellow humans. It was not usual analysis, but impressionist affirmations that came from his pen. For instance,

> Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man. Destruction is not the law of humans. Man lives freely by his readiness to die, if need be, at the hands of his brother, never by killing him. Every murder or other injury, no matter for what cause, committed or inflicted on another is a crime against humanity.[14]

The votary of ahimsa fears none except God. From the cannibalistic era physical man has been violent, but the Spirit is nonviolent. Gandhi proclaimed to the world that he would purchase his country's freedom at the cost of non-violence. But he did not recognize the protracted violent struggle in different parts of the country. At the same time he admitted that perfect nonviolence is impossible as long as we are in the body.

Nonviolence has a positive sense as well. Gandhi writes:

> In its positive form, *ahimsa* means the largest love, greatest charity. If I am a follower of *ahimsa*, I must love my enemy. I must apply the same rules to my wrong-doing father or son. The active *ahimsa* necessarily includes truth and fearlessness. As man cannot deceive the loved one, he does not fear or frighten him or her. Gift of life is the greatest of all gifts; a man who gives it in reality, disarms all hostility. He has paved the way for an honourable understanding. And none who is himself subject to fear can bestow that gift. He must

14 M.K. Gandhi, "Dynamics of Nonviolence: Ahimsa or the Way of Nonviolence" in *Nonviolence: A Reader in the Ethics of Action*, ed., By Doris A. Hunter and Krishna Mallick (New Delhi: The Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1990), 82.

> therefore be himself fearless. A man cannot practice *ahimsa* and be a coward at the same time. The practice of *ahimsa* calls forth the greatest courage.'[15]

Human life involves some form of violence but if one is conscious one can have compassion even on an insect and one 'strives to be free from the deadly coil of *himsa*.' And when two nations are at war the duty of the votary of ahimsa is to stop the war. 'He who is not equal to that duty, he who has no power of resisting war, he who is not qualified to resist war, may take part in war, and yet wholeheartedly try to free himself, his nation and the world from war.'[16] Basic to this is that the power of nonviolence should begin with the mind. Subduing greed is the surest preparation to eschew violence even when the cause appears to be justifiable. Cruel punishment and retaliation should be avoided in all spheres of life including the family. Scientific discoveries in most cases are blood-tainted and thus contribute to violence. '*Ahimsa* is soul-force and the soul is imperishable, changeless and eternal' unlike the atom bomb. Non-cooperation with the perpetrators of violence and injustice does not mean hating them.

A votary of ahimsa cannot be just a utilitarian but should be someone willing to die for the welfare of all. "As soon as a man looks upon himself as a servant of society, earns for its sake, spends for its benefit, then purity enters into his earnings and there is Ahimsa in his venture. Moreover, if men's minds turn towards this way of life, there will come about a peaceful revolution in society, and that without any bitterness."[17]

Ahimsa thus applies not only to individuals but to the whole society. This will prove to be true in this age of wonders, only when people believe in its possibility. Further, 'Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the evil doer, but it means pitting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant…And also I am not pleading for India to practice non-violence because being conscious of her strength and

15 Ibid., 87.
16 Ibid., 88.
17 Ibid., 74.

power. No training in arms is required for realization of her strength (not flesh power but soul).'[18] Though being martial races, India never fought but for a little in self-defense and she represents a 'higher realm of evolution and time alone can show its destiny.' Gandhi believed that police power, strikes and communal disturbances would disappear in due course.

4. Practical Application of Ahimsa

Gandhi claimed that the essence of Hinduism is ahimsa which includes both the negative aspect of non-violence and positive aspect of loving and doing good even to the evil-doers. The way to achieve it is truth or rather truth-force. Though every religion celebrates the idea of non-violence, for him Hinduism embodies it best. Then how did he experiment with it in his life, particularly his political and social life? There are detailed and comprehensive studies that point out the ideal of ahimsa touching all stages of his life from student to the end.[19] We highlight a few.

Let us start with *Swaraj* (self-rule). It was his firm belief that if all were persuaded, then swaraj would be won, worked and maintained 'through truth and Ahimsa alone.' 'True democracy or Swaraj of the masses can never come through untruthful and violent means, for the simple reason that the natural corollary to their use would be to remove all opposition through the suppression or extermination of the antagonists. That does not make for individual freedom. Individual freedom can have the fullest play only under the regime of unadulterated Ahimsa.'[20] We have space to point out only a few and some others will be referred to in the course of the essay.

18 Ibid., 77.

19 Cf., Subhash R. Mehta, *The Gandhian Concept of Practical Non-Violence*, (Mumbai: The Bombay St Paul Society, 2009); M.K. Gandhi, *In Search of the Supreme*, vol. II, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1961), 21-45; Ronald Duncan, ed., *The Writings of Gandhi: A Selection*, (Delhi: Rupa & Co., 1993), 60-99; Nicholas Gillett, *Men Against War*, (New Delhi: The Gandhian Book House, 1991), 78-97.

20 Ibid., 11.

Gandhi was engaged in organizing Kissans and Labourers in Champaran, Gujarat, and though the struggle was protracted he thought it was non-violent, pure and simple. What several violent revolts failed to do satyagraha won, he exclaimed. The participants later joined Congress and the Civil Disobedience Campaign which was for the stoppage of the exploitation by the Europeans. And in his 'war with the rich' Gandhi asked them to find enjoyment in renouncing wealth belonging to all people, while earning their livelihood by whatever work is called for. He writes:

> But I have visions that the end of this war will mean also the end of the rule of capital. I see coming the day of the rule of the poor, whether that rule be through force of arms or of non-violence. Let it be remembered that physical force is transitory even as the body is transitory. But the power of the spirit is everlasting.[21]

Gandhi was never tired of repeating that truth and non-violence alone, held by inner conviction, would equip people to progress in life. "What is gained by violence can not only not be defended by non-violence but the latter requires the abandonment of the ill-gotten gains…Such accumulation by private persons is impossible except through violent means but accumulation by the State in a non-violent society is not only possible, it is desirable and inevitable."[22] How long it will take is a valid question raised by the Communists with whom Gandhi was in dialogue, though he did not compromise on the ultimate test of non-violence. For, he argued, forced and violent acquisition of wealth from the rich will lead to greater non-violence in future. "With non-violence as the rule, life will no doubt be a series of compromises. But it is better than an endless series of clashes."[23] This happened in all campaigns of Gandhi, not without tensions and dilemmas as pointed out by the following writers.

5. Observations and Analytical Comments by Outsiders

Gandhi was not the only champion of the ideal of non-violence, and long before his time there were well-known religious figures and

21 M.K. Gandhi, *Industrial and Agrarian Life and Relations* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publications, 1984), 248.

22 Ibid., 225.

23 Ibid., 242.

two in particular have been associated with his name, Buddha and Jesus. Buddha shared the view of Mahavira that ahimsa was one of the greatest virtues and himsa the worst vice in the path of liberation and Enlightenment. Both affirmed the scheme of *karma-samsara* and while in Jainism vegetation is held as one form of birth, Buddhism has worked out minute details of the working of *karma* and *samsara* with numerous causal connections. They do not bring in ahimsa in their metaphysical framework but assert that it is an indispensable virtue along with right thinking, right view, right action etc. But they did not connect it with actual life situations such as the struggle for survival, the struggle against violent injustice. As we have pointed out ahimsa was incorporated into brahmanic Hinduism in the flux of fusions and amalgamations. Also here we noted that the Jaina scheme of different births was accepted in the bhakti traditions. For example, Manikkavacakar, a cardinal Saiva saint-poet in his famous text *Tiruvācakam* (Sacred Utterance), laments that he was weary of being born as grass, shrub, tree etc (1: 30). This belief raises serious questions about vegetarianism being free of ahimsa!

It is obvious that Gandhi was influenced by Jesus, particularly by his Sermon on the Mount in which it is stated that instead of 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth,' without resisting an evil person one should do this: 'If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also' (Matthew 5: 38-39). This revolutionary teaching of Jesus goes well with many other teachings contained in the Sermon. It has not been easy for Christians and scholars to understand the full implications of these teachings. Did Jesus expect that turning the other cheek would attract kisses on both cheeks from a violent aggressor? The most convincing interpretation is that the Sermon reflects the life of the out-breaking new reign of God, calling for a new awakening. Neither Jesus nor his disciples tried to follow literally but worked to create a condition for each human to be non-violent. They too had a vision and streams of thought in the background. For example, God's identification with the victims (e.g. liberation of the Hebrew slaves from Egypt), establishment of a covenanted community on the basis of justice, peace and love, guidance for a prophetic movement to check deviations and challenge injustice, and a messianic vision

for God's reign in full measure, formed the background. Jesus, with different titles and perceptions by others, understood himself as the true representative of victims on whom he pronounced blessing, challenged the victimizers of religion and society ('woe unto you!') and instilled courage in his disciples to continue his work without fearing those who can destroy only the body but to fear only the one who can destroy both body and soul in fire. Jesus refused to ally with any organized violence even if the goal was liberation, but one or two of his acts show the incidental reaction to injustice. Thus, he cleansed (with any act of violence?) the temple of all malpractices, pointed out that the house of prayer meant for all people had become a den of robbers. Along with this he healed the blind and the lame who had been alienated from the temple for centuries (Mtt. 21: 12-14; Mark 11: 15-18; Luke 19: 45-46; John 2: 13-17). This act invited fierce opposition from the religious leaders and further arrest. One more example: during the trial before the High Priest, taking exception to Jesus' right answer, an official struck him in the face, and Jesus' response was, 'testify as to what is wrong [in what I said]. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?' (Jn. 18: 22-23). Yet his cruel death on a cross could not be avoided. However, there is no reason to doubt the messianic hope which has kept his movement despite many pitfalls.

Is Gandhi's line of thinking appropriate for all life situations in India and the world? Arthur Koestler (1905-83), a Hungarian-British author and journalist, views Gandhi as the 'soul of India' and an embodiment of 'militant non-violence' and observes 'ambivalent feelings for the people of his nation as well as for the people of the world.' He agrees with Eric H. Ericson a famous American psychoanalyst who has done a penetrating study of Gandhi: 'we must hold on to the potential of love in all hate…and become aware of the hate which is in all love. Only if we accept the presence of ambivalence of the most loving human encounters does truth become just what you mean by it, namely, that which supports evolving humanity in the antagonisms of divided function, be it in the context of inequalities of size, age, sex, or power.'[24] After illustrating with a number of issues in Gandhi's

24 Arthur Koestler, "The Dilemma of Nonviolence: The Yogi and the Commissar,"

life and his stand on nonviolence including the limited success of his *satyagraha* on various occasions, with reference to a most poignant moment in history, Koestler writes:

> But Gandhi's methods of nonviolence had their Himalayan inconsistencies, and the advice he proffered to other nations was often quite irresponsible by any human standard. Although he repeated over and again that only people far advanced on the spiritual trail were able to practice nonviolent resistance, he did not hesitate to recommend it as a universal panacea, even in such tragically inappropriate situations as that of the German Jews under the Nazis. In December 1938, after the first nationwide pogrom, he wrote: 'I make bold to say that, if the Jews can summon to their aid soul-power that comes only from nonviolence, Herr Hitler will bow before the courage which he will own is infinitely superior to that shown by his best storm-troopers.'[25]

And in 1946, when the incredible news of six million gassed victims became known (he wrote): 'The Jews should have offered themselves to the butcher's knife. They should have thrown themselves into the sea from cliffs…It would have roused the world and the people of Germany.' There was only one mitigating circumstance to utterances like this: Gandhi's notorious ignorance of international affairs.

Koestler continues to point out Gandhi's questionable advise and admonitions to nations involved in the World War II including Britain, to whom he wrote asking them to fight Nazism without arms and violence and suggesting they surrender to Hitler and Mussolini; they may take from them whatever they wanted even if it would involve slaughter of British men, women and children. Even within a few hours of his tragic death, to a journalist who had asked: 'how would you meet the atom bomb with non-violence,' Gandhi replies: 'I will not go into shelter. I will come out in the open and let the pilot see I have not a trace of ill will against him. The pilot will not see our faces from his great heights, I know. But the longing in our hearts—that he will not come to harm—would reach up to him and his eyes would be opened.'[26] Other instances quoted include Gandhi's role in the

in *Nonviolence: A Reader in the Ethics of Action*, ed., Hunter and Mallick, 148 (Quoted from Arckenson, *Gandhi's Truth* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969), 244.

25 Ibid., 168.

26 Ibid.

recruitment of sergeants for the British army during the First World War, his encounter with the bloody riots in Bengal and Bihar after which he admitted the inapplicability of ahimsa to village masses, his horror of clashes between Hindus and Muslims after partition, his silence at the time of celebration of Independence and his declared support for the Indian army to redeem part of Kashmir by Pakistan. These seem to suggest that Gandhi was in an intense dilemma, if not deluded, about the relevance of swaraj and ahimsa for all situations in the lives of all people. Yet Gandhi was unwilling to listen to the reasoned arguments of his critics and consequently he could easily be classed as a spiritual guru or cult figure rather than one who could inspire constructive action and integrated spirituality.

Reinhold Niebuhr (1891-1972), an influential American Christian theologian, analyzed Gandhi's approach to ahimsa from yet a different viewpoint. He located the problem in sinful human nature, with its egoism and unthinking group behavior. In his famous book *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932) he distinguished between violent and nonviolent coercion and observed that the latter may also result in the destruction of life or property as they usually do.

"The difference is that destruction is not intended but the inevitable consequence of nonviolent coercion. The chief difference between violence and nonviolence is not in the degree of destruction which they cause, the difference is usually considerable, but in the aggressive character of the one and the negative character of the other. Nonviolence is essentially non-cooperation."[27] It may find expression in resistance to accepting questionable policies, refusal to pay tax and industrial strike which may bring good results, although loss of life and property may not be totally avoidable in an interdependent society. "The cotton spinners of Lancashire are impoverished by Gandhi's boycott of English cotton, though they can hardly be regarded as the authors of British imperialism."[28] Here non-cooperation results in social consequences 'not totally dissimilar from those of violence.' It is important to note that 'non-resistance is so frequently confused

27 R. Neibhur, "The 'Sublime Madness of Nonviolence," in *Nonviolence: A Reader in the Ethics of Action*, ed., Hunter and Mallick, 199f.

28 Ibid., 200.

with nonviolent resistance' and Gandhi 'has himself contributed to that confusion.' While calling his method the use of non-physical, spiritual soul-force or truth-force, very early in his development of the technique of non-violence in South Africa he declared: "passive resistance is a misnomer."[29] Is speaking of an active physical form of resistance that does not achieve spirituality simply because it is negative tenable?

> The confusion in Gandhi's mind seems to arise from his unwillingness, or perhaps his inability, to recognize the qualifying influences of his political responsibilities upon the purity of his original ethical and religious ideals of non-resistance. Beginning with the idea that social injustice could be resisted by purely ethical, rational and emotional forces (truth-force and soul-force in the narrower sense of the term), he came finally to realize the necessity of some type of physical coercion upon the foes of his people's freedom, as every political leader must…In spite of his use of various forms of negative physical resistance, civil-disobedience, boycotts and strikes, he seems to persist in giving them a connotation which really belongs to pure non-resistance. "Jesus Christ, Daniel and Socrates represent the purest form of passive resistance or soul force," he declared in a passage in which he explains the meaning of what is most undeniably nonviolent resistance rather than non-resistance. All this is a pardonable confusion in the soul of a man who is trying to harmonize the insights of a saint with necessities of state-craft, a very difficult achievement. But it is nevertheless a confusion.[30]

However, Niebuhr appreciates Gandhi as he never 'commits himself to pure non-resistance' and 'politically realistic to believe in its efficacy.' He points out how he first supported the British in gratitude for all benefits he enjoyed but later refused to voluntarily participate in its wars. He also said of Gandhi's debate with his friend C.F. Andrews over burning foreign cloth and with the artist and poet Rabindranath Tagore over his first non-violent resistance campaign (1919-20), which was called off as it issued in violence and 'in him political realism qualified religious idealism, in a way which naturally

29 Ibid., 201.
30 Ibid., 201f.

bewildered his friends who carried less or no political responsibility.' The second campaign also resulted inevitably in violence, though it was not called off. Even then, for Niebuhr,

> Gandhi is not less sincere or morally less admirable because considerations of political efficacy partly determine his policies and qualify the purity of the doctrine of 'ahimsa' to which he is committed. The responsible leader of a political community is forced to use coercion to gain his ends. He may, as Mr. Gandhi, make every effort to keep his instrument under the dominion of his spiritual ideal; but he must use it, and it may be necessary at times to sacrifice a degree of moral purity for political effectiveness.[31]

Niebuhr adds that the use of truth-force or soul-force, 'in the purer and more exact meaning of those words, means an appeal to the reason and good will of an opponent in a social struggle.' Whatever the result it is still education, not education for propaganda, which is different from 'the agitation for freedom and equality carried on by a disinherited group.'

There are different types of nonviolence and education. Gandhi's 'designation of nonviolence and non-cooperation as "soul-force" is less confusing and more justified when this emphasis upon nonviolence of spirit is considered.' Nonviolence for him is his expression of the ideal of love, the spirit of good will. 'It is the temper and spirit in which a political policy is conducted, which he really is designating, rather than a particular political technique. Thus, while justifying his support of England during the War, he declared: "Nonviolence works in a mysterious manner. Often a man's actions defy analysis in terms of nonviolence when he is absolutely nonviolent in the highest sense of the term, and is subsequently found to be so. All I can claim for my conduct is that I was, in that instance, cited, actuated in the interest of nonviolence. There was no thought of sordid national or other interests."[32]

Niebuhr reads here justification for violence if it proceeds from perfect moral goodwill though nonviolence is the better method of expressing

31 Ibid., 202f.

32 Quoted, Ibid., 204f.

goodwill and the latter protects the agent from resentments which may turn to be cruel. Self-suffering is better than causing suffering for others. Gandhi made a distinction between individuals and oppressive systems which are more immoral. The common agreement between Gandhi and the Viceroy Lord Irwin after the first Round-table Conference 'was a perfect example of the moral possibilities of a nonviolent social dispute' and such outcome of similar disputes in violent terms was unthinkable. Therefore nonviolence is a better strategy for the weak or minority with a loving temper before the mighty or majority. In the end, the benefit of nonviolent method, even if there is unavoidable self-suffering, will be greater.

6. Concluding Remarks and Questions

There is no reason to doubt Gandhi's genuine commitment to the ideal of non-violence. The contradictions that have been pointed out and the dilemmas faced may well be explained as part of a committed search into the nature of truth and continued experiments with nonviolent approach to life in general and to coercive forces in particular. The lasting legacy of Gandhi's experiment with ahimsa is debatable. One observation is that Gandhi's open identification with Hinduism and claim that nonviolence is its essence and projecting the Gita as the universal mother has been a boost to the Hindutva movement and its unloving approach to religious minorities in today's India. He misconstrued the historical sequence of Hindu scriptures and their fundamental foci as we have noted and serious scholars of Hinduism would not agree with him. He affirmed with Krishna that soul was imperishable but failed to note that this was to encourage Arjuna to kill on the battlefield.

Also, while stressing personal and direct forces of oppression, Gandhi failed to acknowledge the systemic violence in Hindu society. We point out three sources: First, he was adamant in not accepting the nexus of varna-caste-untouchability. There is no point in killing the brood while nourishing the cobra! In many villages Dalit communities are still alienated from public well and temples. The inter-caste conflicts including 'honour killing' are more steady and challenging

than other conflicts. It is hard to deny that if Gandhi had willed that the caste system be obliterated from the India society for ever, then India would have had a chance to become truly glorious. Second, the cow-protection riots, initiated by Swami Dayananda Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj in 1882, have taken several lives. The last reported instance was lynching a person in September 2015 for keeping beef in his house in Uttarpradesh. Third, Gandhi advocated learning of the northern Indian language Hindi, derivative of Sanskrit, by every Indian. Successive central governments have tried to impose it on southern Indians, particularly Tamils. Since 1937, hundreds of lives have been lost in anti-Hindi agitations. It is still smoldering with sudden flames from time to time in the name of Hindi or Sanskrit and the Hindutva forces and their governments are inviting condemnation with the warning of returning to those intense campaigns in the past.

VIOLENCE AND NON-VIOLENCE
A Reflective Probe beyond the Either/or Structure

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Abstract: *This paper is an attempt to consider the non-logical meaning of a-himsa by looking beyond the either/or structure. The study begins with a philosophical analysis on the question of 'violence,' followed by a short clarification of Gandhian understanding of 'non-violence.' In the final section we relate violence and non-violence (himsa and a-himsa), paying special attention to the negative prefix 'a-' in 'a-himsa.' In order to substantiate our position that a-himsa gets a non-logical meaning by the methodological device of coining the term with a negative prefix, a case-study is carried out about two terms (a-dvaita and a-letheia) coined in the same way. The study is concluded by reiterating the positive and primordial meaning of a-himsa in Gandhi.*

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Violence, it is rightly said, has been as old as the humanity itself;[1] but what about non-violence? Before violence began to show itself as a regular human phenomenon, there was the absence of violence. Thus if we take non-violence as the mere absence or negation of violence,

1 Almost all the religions teach that almost from the beginning of creation the humans turned out to be persons in conflict. Bible explains as to how the humans turned against God, followed by a turning against one another. The killing of Abel by Cain in the book of Genesis was the beginning of a long stretch of conflicts and wars among the humans.

then non-violence is older than violence. But is non-violence same as the absence of violence? If no violence were to be there, would there be non-violence? This paper begins with a philosophical look into the question of violence, followed by a short consideration of non-violence, and is concluded with a reflective probe into their relation.

1. Violence

Humans are gifted with reason and moral sense.[2] But the more developed they claim to have become, the more 'developed' they become in their violence too! This can be seen when we differentiate violence among the 'developed' humans from that among the 'undeveloped' humans and non-humans.

1.1. Violence among the 'Undeveloped': Need-linked

We do find 'violence' among the 'undeveloped' non-human creatures and the humans—it is violence with a difference. There is in the non-human creatures a tendency of 'holding the territory'—an area under the control of a pair or a group. Those who trespass into this territory are sure to be chased away, attacked, or even killed. The *boundary* of this controlled area is rather 'elastic'; the area becomes bigger or smaller according to the 'need' of those in control of the area. Thus 'holding the territory' is need-linked.[3] The 'need' is related to *breeding* and *feeding*—the two basic needs.[4] A protected area under one's control is needed for 'breeding'—for mating and for protecting the mates and the young ones. It is also required for 'feeding'—for self-preservation and for food.[5]

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2 According to the Greek myth of creation, the human creation took place in three stages. Only at the last stage they were given the gift of 'moral sense' with which they were given the *capacity* to live in peace and harmony.

3 Cf. W.H. Thorpe, *Animal Nature and Human Nature* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1974), 250ff.

4 We do not find animals killing other creatures just for the 'fun' of it; after their need is met, they are not interested in hunting after creatures and in killing them. But the humans in this respect are totally different.

5 It is generally observed that the animals do not go out of their 'area' either in search of food or in search of mates. So the 'fights' occur ordinarily within their assumed area of control.

From what is given above we note that the animals enter into violence and fights, either when their basic needs are under threat or in view of meeting their basic needs. When it comes to the question of the 'developed' humans, we find that human violence is not mostly need-related. But among the 'primitives'[6] and the tribals, the fights are mostly need-linked, just as in the case of the animals. Such 'original' people too have an area under their control, and the 'size' of the area is related to the 'need' they have; and they too do not go out into another's area, unless threatened by the other or necessitated by the growing 'needs' brought about by unforeseen natural calamities. But as the humans became more sophisticated and 'civilized,'[7] the fights have not been any more *need*-linked, rather they have been *greed*-linked. The modern wars and violence are necessitated not by genuinely 'objective' needs, but 'constructed' needs, as it is evident from most of the wars.

From our above consideration we find that there is a great difference between the animal violence and human violence both in the 'how' (the humans use more sophisticated ways and means than the animals) and in the 'why' (the animals fight and kill because of need, the humans because of greed and pride). What disturbs us is not the 'how,' but the 'why.' What must be the underlying 'reason' for the humans to be so *inhuman*? We shall take a philosophical look at this question.

1.2. Violence among the 'Developed': Greed-Linked

We are baffled at the phenomenon of human violence, and ask ourselves as to how the humans have landed in such a situation. This will hopefully clarify the 'why' of such a phenomenon. We refer here

6 We do not use the expression 'primitives' not in the pejorative sense of 'uncivilized and crude' people, but rather in the positive sense of 'the people uncontaminated by the modern sophistication and impersonality.'

7 We are using the term 'civilized' here in the pejorative sense of 'being contaminated by non-human characteristics.' For a study on civilization as different from culture, cf., Johnson Puthenpurackal, "Culture and Civilization: A Philosophical Probe into Their Relation," in *Religion and Culture: A Multicultural Discussion* (Festschrift in Honour of Francis X. D'Sa, SJ), ed., Clemens Mendonca & Berd Jochen Hilberath (Pune: Institute for the Study of Religion, 2011), 5-16.

to two of the *ontological*[8] 'reasons' ingrained in the very being of the humans. These reasons are presented as the two aspects of human greed or desire.

1.2.1. The Desire of Being Someone: Human Pride

The most important reason for the *why* of human violence is to be found in the very metaphysical nature of the humans: *being* one's self, ego, subjectivity—in ordinary language, human pride.

According to Heidegger, Western philosophy and culture has been very much subject-centred. The process of the subject 'objectifying' reality manifests itself even in the forms of manipulating and subjugating the object—the cosmos, the humans, the Divine. The powerful want to exploit and to have control over the weaker. The whole earth has become a market place of transactions and a battlefield of violence. Thus the ultimate 'reason' for human violence and wars can be traced back to the domineering character of human subjectivity with unbridled 'freedom.'[9] The attitude of domination began to show itself gradually in more and more crude and sophisticated forms of violence and wars.

Levinas too finds that Western philosophy has been considering everything under the encompassing notion of Being, in its various guises, such as the One, the *Same* (*le Même*), etc. Such a philosophy of the *Same* is a celebration of the narcissism[10] of the ego, with an over-emphasis on *autonomy* and individual freedom. The 'I' or the ego, in

8 The distinction between 'ontological' and 'ontical' is of importance. *Ontological* refers to the Being (*Sein*) of something, whereas *ontical* refers to something as an entity (*Seiendes*). Thus the ontological 'why' of human violence is to be found in the very Being of the humans.

9 Freedom as understood in such a tradition is a freedom of choice, which does not respect others' freedom. One is concerned only about one's own *freedom* even at the neglect of that of others. This is the reason why the powerful want to enter into mortal combat with the powerless, by which the freedom of the *one* is protected, of the *other* is destroyed.

10 The term 'narcissism' was coined by Freud, basing himself on the Greek myth of Narcissus (or Narkisos), according to which the handsome young man became so enamoured with his reflection in water, that he fell in love with it, and thus with himself. Thus narcissism stands for self-love.

its totalizing tendency, looks at the other in terms of an economical relation of 'utility' and 'profit.'[11] The essence of *totalization* thus consists in the I's desire to make itself the focus of totality by drawing the world into its circle and by trying to consolidate and expand this circle. Thus Levinas, through his characterization of Western philosophy as *totalizing* and *auto-nomous*, interprets the self as *desiring to be itself* by consolidating and expanding itself into the world of things and persons.

In this struggle to totalize everything into oneself, the 'things' may submit themselves; but difficulties arise with persons who too demonstrate the same totalizing tendencies! The ego-centrism of one subject collides with that of other subjects. The result is inevitable conflict![12] Everyone sees the others not as 'persons,' but as 'powers' to be conquered. Thus the tendency towards totalizing sovereignty manifests itself in the form of violence and wars. It is human *pride* and *selfishness* that make the humans subjugate and swallow every other with insatiable and never-ending urge toward greater power, for the sake of which the humans are prepared to go to any extent of brutality and cruelty! But it is not only the humans' never-ending desire *to be someone* (above everyone else) but also *to have something* (more than everybody else) that constantly provokes them to enter into violence and wars.

1.2.2. The Desire of Having Something: Human Greed

The ego-centric subjectivity in its narcissistic drive tries to expand its circle of domination and totalization by appropriating as much as possible—by giving free vent to one's greed for possession. In the world of today, possession is valued in terms of money. The power of money has become today almost the only criterion of one's 'standing' in the society.

11 Heidegger has made a masterly interpretation of the modern technology in terms of Western metaphysical tendency of 'intellectual domination' becoming 'physical manipulation' of reality. In this process the human is reduced to a commodity of market-value, and the whole earth becomes a 'market'.

12 In his explanation of conflict, Levinas must have been influenced by Sartre, according to whom every subject tries to reduce the other to an object by his hateful stare. The result is mutual enslavement and conflict.

Money[13] can be looked at in terms of Marcel's distinction between 'being' (*être*) and 'having' (*avoir*). 'Having' stands for the most fundamental relation that a human being has towards material things. Although I can relate myself to other things various ways—using, admiring, consuming, destroying, etc.—I need first to *have* them for the other uses. That is why *having* is referred to as the basic relation to material things.[14] But money is a 'having' with a difference. The 'having' of money enables all other 'having,' and it is commonly present; money is thus a having that is both *foundational* and *universal.* Although in principle the having externalizes the object of having, it does not succeed in that. "The self becomes incorporated in the thing possessed."[15] Rightly does Marcel hold that "our possessions swallow us up."[16] The desire to possess is kept on constantly kindled that there seems to be no end to it.

As the desire to have money and possessions has no limit, the humans tend to acquire as much wealth as possible even by violence and bloodshed. The culture of globalization that we are in is a culture of 'having.' One's 'having' determines one's 'being.' Therefore there is a craze and competition for more 'having.' The 'reason' behind most of the violence and wars in the contemporary period is nothing other than the craze to build up one's economic power.[17] Thus the desire of *having something* or the greed for amassing wealth is yet another 'why' of human violence.

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13 For a philosophical consideration of the phenomenon of money, cf., Johnson Puthenpurackal, "The Phenomenon of Money: A Philosophical Look," in *Truth, Power, Money: A Postmodern Reading*, ed., Stanislaus Swamikannu (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corp., 2004), 77-91.

14 This is borne out by the fact that in almost all the languages the next commonest verb to the verb 'to be' is the verb 'to have.' Cf., John Macquarrie, *In Search of Humanity* (London: SCM Press, 1982), 72.

15 G. Marcel, *Being and Having* (Dacre Press, 1949), 148. As cited by J. Macquarrie, *Op. cit.*, 80.

16 Ibid.

17 The attack by the U.S. on Iraq is purely motivated by the desire to have control over the oil-wealth in Iraq. But, since this reason is not 'presentable' in the civilized world, some other reasons are cooked up and presented for public consumption.

1.3. The Philosophical 'How' of Human Violence

Once the humans are intoxicated with the craze for '*being* someone' and '*having* something,' they will be on a rampage to get it realized. Nothing can stop their blind struggle toward *self*-affirmation and *self*-development by giving vent to their pride and greed. In one's proud and greedy march forward, the human finds everyone else as a *rival*, as a hindrance to one's narcissistic existence. It is none other than Sartre who has dwelt at length on the theme of the other being a rival to one's existence.

According to Sartre the relation that exists among persons is that of hatred, conflict or rivalry. This should not be taken as a moral statement, but an expression of a phenomenological reflection.[18] The other is manifested in my awareness of being objectified. In my experience of *being objectified* I become ashamed,[19] as I am drained off my subjectivity. The other can do anything to me, as I am immobilized and 'dead.' I am *just there* for the other: a mere *object*! The other is very really present, destroying my subjectivity. To regain my subjectivity there is only one way out: I try to reduce the other to an object.[20] Thus we are interlocked in mutual enslavement; there exists among the humans inevitable and constant conflict: each one trying to destroy the subjectivity of the other.

What is presented by Sartre may be challenged from many a philosophical perspective. But it is our conviction that Sartrean way of looking at human relations, however negative it may appear to be, carries much truth in it.[21] Individuals and institutions, religions and nations, are involved in mortal combat to establish one's supremacy

18 Sartre carries out the phenomenological analysis of 'look' in his most important book: *Being and Nothingness.* William A. Luijpen dwells on the question of the relation of 'hatred' in his *Existential Phenomenology* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 286-304.

19 According to Sartre, shame is the recognition that I am just as the other sees me.

20 Foucault speaks of 'gaze' (supervision) as a way to establish one's control over others. With the advancement of technology more sophisticated ways of gaze are used, such as surveillance camera, watch-towers, spy-satellites, etc.

21 In every aspect of life 'hateful stare' is concealedly present in a civilized way. Every competition is a civilized expression of 'hateful stare.'

over others. Since the other is seen as a rival, and is always looked at with suspicion, in order to have total supremacy over the others, they are done away with or annihilated! As the craze for power and possession is present in all spheres of life, individuals, institutions and nations enter into violent and inhuman means to realize this craze. Thus wars and conflicts among the humans are not a rare possibility, but a frequent factuality. Thus the triumphant march of the humans in their self-affirmation leads them to conflict, violence and war.

2. Non-Violence

Human history from its very inception has been one of fighting violence with violence—the logic of *tit for tat*. Such a history was re-written for the first time by Jesus Christ with a philosophy of non-violence or universal love. Jesus proclaimed it by word and deed, and it was faithfully followed to some extent during the first three centuries until Christianity became a political power.[22] Thereafter the church was triumphantly journeying as a powerful structure continued until the 20th century, during which Christ's teaching of non-violence and universal love was forgotten. It was made audible in the 20th century by none other than Mahatma Gandhi.[23] He translated non-violence as a socio-political weapon, and not a pious religious thought. Before his non-violent weapon, the violent weapons were

22 Christ was a movement, a charismatic figure, whose life and message shows that he did not care so much for the structure as for the persons. The movement-aspect of Christ was faithfully lived and was vividly manifest during early periods of the Church. A radical change took place with the conversion of Constantine: charism gradually gave way to structure. Thus there took place a gradual transition of Christianity from being a dynamic and revolutionary *movement* to a well-structured institution. Cf., Leonardo Boff, *Church: Charism and Power. Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church*, trans., John W. Diercksmeier (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1988).

23 Gandhi was very much influenced by the teachings of Christ on non-violence, especially his following words: "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile" (Mt 5: 38-41).

silenced! Gandhiji brought to light in *theoria* and *praxis* the power of non-violence. Although *ahimsa* has been considered as an important value in the teachings of many religions, it was Gandhi who promoted it very successfully by applying it to all spheres of life, particularly to politics, so much so that *ahimsa* today is almost identified with Gandhian way of life and thought.

Although non-violence or *ahimsa* is an essential teaching in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, it became popular and got identified with Gandhian life and thought. Non-violence got developed as an enriched philosophical notion in his style of political resistance movement, which sums up and embraces the various values of love, truth, *brahmacarya*, non-violent resistance, fearlessness, freedom, non-cooperation, and equal respect for all religions.[24] A short clarification of these values that are implied in the profound notion of non-violence is in place. It has been popularly believed that hatred can be overcome by a return-hatred of greater intensity, violence by a more powerful violence! Gandhiji, influenced by Christ's revolutionary thought of 'love for the enemies,' reiterates that hatred can be overcome only by love. Thus, the core of non-violence consists in *love* in its pure depth and width. Only love can win over and change the hateful enemy. Non-violence, as Gandhi propounded, is synonymous with love in the purest and widest sense. The notion of *truth* is the nucleus in Gandhian thinking on God and morality. It is one's commitment to truth that makes non-violence so powerful. Gandhian thought is held together by the two hinges of truth and non-violence (*satya* and *ahimsa*). Ahimsa and truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. We may at most say that ahimsa is the means, and truth is the goal. The term *brahmacarya* refers to a life lived in union with God, the Truth, through a life of total self-control, enabling one to attain perfect freedom from all passions. The act of non-violence consists in *non-violent resistance* without intending or inflicting injury to anyone. It is one's *fearlessness*, emerging from one's commitment to truth, that gives one the 'energy' to follow the way of non-violence in total *freedom*. One of the powerful weapons

24 Jolly Chakkalakkal, "Ahimsa," in *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed., Johnson Puthenpurackal et al (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2010), 56-60.

of non-violence is *non-cooperation*, not against any individual, but against the unjust social system. According to Gandhiji a real *satyagrahi* is the one who tries to convert one's opponent solely by the strength of one's character and suffering. Our peace of mind increases in spite of suffering; we become braver and more enterprising.[25] Non-violence can be practiced only by those who have *equal respect for all religions* by holding fast to a trans-religiosity of the humans. "Religion is one tree with many branches, as branches, religions are many, but as tree is one, religion is also only one."[26] Gandhi prefers to use the expression, 'respect' rather than 'tolerance' of other religions, since 'tolerance' implies a presumption of the superiority of one's religion, and assumption of the inferiority of the other ones.[27]

Non-violence or *ahimsa*, according to Gandhi, is not mere passive resistance. Besides the above-mentioned elements, Prof. Pushparajan presents the specificity of Gandhian non-violence in terms of the following three phrases. (1) A '*weapon of the brave*' vs. *weapon of the weak*: one accepts suffering and pain, not because one is unable to muster physical force against the opponent, but with a deliberate determination to secure justice. (2) A '*matter of principle'* vs. a *measure of expediency*: one avoids the use of violence not as a tactical and calculative device, but because of one's conviction of and commitment to the value of non-violence. (3) '*Love of the opponent'* vs. *hatred of the opponent*: the non-violent approach is motivated by love for the opponent by exerting spiritual force in order to elicit a conversion in him/her. Gandhi was convinced that only by love we can win over the oppressor.

Thus non-violence was born anew through the life and thought of Mahatma Gandhi as a powerful weapon with a difference; and the difference consists in its being religiously rooted, morally lenient, socially sensitive, humanly viable,…and presently needed.

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25 Cf., M.K. Gandhi, *From YeravdaMandir* (Ahemedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1932).

26 Jolly Chakkalakkal, "Ahimsa," in *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 59.

27 Cf., M.K. Gandhi, *From Yeravda Mandir* (Ahmadabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1932).

3. Violence and Non-Violence

In the light of what has been delineated above, we find that *a-himsa* (non-violence) is not anything negative, referring to some absence or negativity. In its linguistic *structure* the term, *a-himsa*, is negative since it refers to the absence of *himsa* or violence—the Sanskrit word *himsa* means violence and *a-himsa* is its opposite; but in its *meaning* it refers to the positive reality of 'love': the power of love! *Ahimsa* or non-violence is not non-action, passive non-resistance or inaction, but action without any violence. In fact *himsa* has a negative meaning and *ahimsa* has a positive one.[28] The word *ahimsa* literally means non-injury, or more narrowly, non-killing and more widely, harmlessness. *Ahimsa* binds us from killing or hurting any living being, and even from hostile thought, work or act. Non-violence is (at least, supposed to be) the law of our human species. It is the highest moral law which aims at the betterment of the individual by subduing and rising above all the inhuman instincts. It is an essential teaching of the major religions of the world, especially the ones that originated in ancient India.

We find *a-himsa* (non-violence) as a negative term when we look at it from an either/or structure of traditional philosophy. But it has a primordial meaning that transcends the either/or structure, if we take a look at the very formulation of similar terms with the negative prefix 'a-'.

3.1. A Case-Study of the Negative Prefix 'A-' in A-dvaita and A-letheia

We carry out this case-study of two terms, *a-dvaita* and *a-letheia*, in which the negative prefix 'a-' brings about a meaning different from the popularly taken 'logically negative' one.[29] This is intended

28 It is very similar to the two terms, *finite* and *infinite*; ordinarily 'infinite' is taken as positive, and 'finite' as something less than the 'infinite' and thus a *negative* term. Actually the meaning of infinite is 'that which is *not* finite,' and thus a negative term.

29 This question has already been elaborately considered by the present author in a study of his: Johnson Puthenpurackal, "Advaita and Aletheia: An East-West Parallel," in *Studies in Vedanta: Essays in Honour of Prof. Rama Rao Pappu* (15th

to substantiate our proposal that '*a-himsa*' has to be taken in its non-logical meaning. *Advaita* in]ankara and *aletheia* in Heidegger are two comprehensive notions in the philosophical thinking of two stalwarts of philosophy in the East and in the West respectively. We shall consider these notions only with regard to the use of the negative prefix.[30]

Classical orthodox Indian philosophy is traditionally discussed in terms of six systems, the last of which is Vedanta, and Śankara with his non-dualistic (*advaitic*) interpretation of reality is the chief exponent of *Advaita Vedānta*. With unparalleled skill and subtility Śankara worked out his *advaita* philosophy and developed a non-dual vision of reality basing himself on the sacred writings. What we are interested in is the *advaitic* vision, which refers to a relation—a special kind of relation of *identity* and *difference* that transcends the strict mathematico-logical understanding of the West. Primarily it refers to the relation between Brahman and the soul.[31] The nature of this relation is one of 'difference-cum-non-difference' (*bhedābheda*).[32] Between Brahman and the soul there is difference as well as non-difference (identity). They are not-one (*anēka*), not-two (*advaita*); they are 'non-dual' (*a-dvaita*).[33] Understanding of this non-duality is not by an intellectual cognition, but rather by our *becoming* non-dual with Brahman.[34] Non-duality can be understood, on the one hand, as the absence of all differences in the state of *Brahmānubhava*, and on the other hand, as the realization of the ultimate unreality or illusory nature of all differences because of the realization of Brahman which is everything or besides which there is nothing.[35] Hence *Ś*ankara does

International Congress of Vedanta, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam), (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2006), 199-211.

30 Our purpose here is not a study of these philosophical notions; we consider this study only as a stepping stone to show that a-himsa has a non-logical meaning.

31 We can also speak of a non-dual relation between Brahman and the world, and the humans and the world.

32 S.M.Srinivasa Chari, *The Philosophy of Vedāntasūtra* (New Delhi: MunshiramMancharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1998), 79.

33 S.C. Mudgal, *Advaita of]ankara: A Reappraisal* (Delhi: Motilal, 1975), 2.

34 Subash Anand, *Hindu Inspiration for Christian Reflection: Towards a Hindu-Christian Theology* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 2004), 69.

35 A. Ramamurti, *Advaitic Mysticism of Śankara* (Santiniketan: Viswa-Bharati, 1974), 182.

not hold to one or the other extreme position of total *identity* (monism) or total *difference* (dualism), and thus he developed a philosophical vision: *a-dvaita* (non-dualism). Because of the novelty of this notion, it has been subjected to a variety of interpretations. Our contention is only this: by coining a term with the help of the negative prefix '*a,*' Śankara takes us to a realm that transcends the logically precise realms of one-ness and two-ness of reality. Such a characterization of *advaita* made many a Western mind consider Śankara as logically 'imprecise' and ambiguous, until perhaps contemporary thinkers in the West, like Martin Heidegger, began to think non-logically in the twentieth century, just as Śankara did in the ninth century.

Heideggerian philosophy has two clearly distinct phases: the *earlier* Heidegger and *later*.[36] For our purpose here we are presently concerned about Heidegger's notion of '*a-letheia*' which finds itself in the context of his notion of Being/truth in his later thought. In Heidegger's later thought Being/truth that Dasein has been trying to disclose or un-conceal (in the earlier thought), shows itself now as the very *un-concealing*. In keeping with the thought-pattern of later-Heidegger, Being or truth is to be thought in terms of *Ereignis* or 'Event-ing.'[37] Accordingly, Being or truth is to be seen as the 'difference' or 'un-concealing' between Being as *concealing* and entities as *revealing*.[38] The dual aspect of truth as revealing and concealing is very much central to Heidegger.

In his lectures on Heraclitus,[39] Heidegger dwells at length on the pre-Socratic notion, *physis*, relating it to *aletheia*. In *Logos* too Heidegger

36 For a detailed consideration of Heidegger's philosophy in its two phases, cf., Johnson J. Puthenpurackal, *Heidegger: Through Authentic Totality to Total Authenticity* (Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1987).

37 Although the present author has rendered *Ereignis* as 'Event of Appropriation' in his book, *Heidegger: Through Authentic Totality to Total Authenticity*, he is inclined to render it now as 'Event-ing' because of its dynamic meaning.

38 For a detailed analysis of this structure of *Ereignis*, cf., J.J. Puthenpurackal, *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 483-85; *Heidegger: Through Authentic Totality to Total Authenticity*, (Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1987), 144-45, 175-225.

39 *Heraklit*, Gesamtausgabe, Abt., II, Bd., 55 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1979). These lectures were delivered during the summer-semesters of 1943-44.

finds the striking unity of its original meaning with that of *physis* and *aletheia*.[40] "*Logos* is *in itself and at the same time* a revealing and a concealing. It is *Aletheia*."[41] Thus we have come to the climax of Heideggerian thinking on truth as *aletheia*, which contains its dual dimension: revealing and concealing.[42] This dual aspect is well contained in the term 'un-concealment' (*Un-Verborgenheit*),[43] which is the original meaning of *A-letheia*. The term '*aletheia*' literally means 'truth.' But Heidegger does not take truth as opposed to 'untruth' or falsity; he takes it as the revealing-concealing process. To bring out this meaning Heidegger exploits the etymological meaning of '*a-letheia*' (un-concealing)—'a' the negative prefix with '*lethe'* (concealing). Instead of using the familiar terms, concealing or revealing, Heidegger uses the unfamiliar expression, 'un-concealing' (*Un-Verborgenheit*), *a-letheia*. Through this expression he wants to convey that Being/truth does not consist merely in 'revealing' nor in 'concealing'; he takes us rather to the realm of 'un-concealing' that transcends the logically precise realms of 'revealing' and 'concealing'.

Now that we have delineated the notions of '*a-dvaita*' and '*a-letheia*,' we can find a parallel between them. Although these terms do not have the same meaning, they have the same structure of meaning as they are coined in the same manner: with the help of the negative prefix, 'a-'. In the ordinary logical understanding, *a-dvaita* (non-dualism), as the negation of dualism, should have meant 'monism.' So also, *a-letheia* (un-concealment), as the negation of concealment, should normally mean 'revealment.' But both Śankara and Heidegger have

40 For a more detailed consideration of these pre-Socratic notions, cf., J.J.Puthenpurackal, *Heidegger:Through Authentic Totality to otal Authenticity*, 204-07.

41 "Der *Logos* ist *in sich zumal* ein Entbergen und Verbergen. Er ist die *Aletheia*." *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 4. Aufl., (Pfullingen: Neske, 1978), 213.

42 Heidegger uses numerous images to speak of the dual aspect of the truth of Being, such as world and earth, giving and withholding, appropriation and expropriation, nearness and farness, emerging and submerging, presencing and absencing, waking and sleeping, etc. For a more complete list with the appropriate references, cf., J.J. Puthenpurackal, *Heidegger*, 209.

43 This vaguely touched upon distinction between revealment and un-concealment is of importance, in our view. Logically and metaphysically both the terms mean the same: double negative (un-concealment) is equal to positive (revealment).

distanced themselves from such an ordinary logical meaning that goes in line with the *either/or structure* of thinking; they have transcended the boundary of opposites, and thought them together: *advaita* refers to both one and two, *a-letheia* is both revealing and concealing, but neither of them exclusively.[44] But it does not mean that the 'opposites' are merely juxtaposed or mixed together, creating a logical vagueness and confusion! We need to look at *advaita* and *aletheia* not with the rigid logicality, but with a supra-logicality that is able to 'see' the '*difference*'[45] rather than merely 'the different.' To this primordial realm of 'difference' both Śankara and Heidegger take us through the notions of *advaita* and *aletheia*, by using the same methodological device of coining a term with the negative prefix '*a-*'.

3.2. A-himsa: Its Primordial Meaning beyond the Either/or Structure

Our detailed consideration of the methodological device of coining a term with the negative prefix '*a-*' helps us to understand the meaning of *a-himsa* beyond the either/or structure. We started this section (3) of our study with a reminder that from a logico-mathematical point of view *ahimsa* has a negative meaning of the 'absence of *himsa*'—absence of violence, passive inaction, etc—but *ahimsa* has a deeper and wider meaning beyond the mere absence of violence (*himsa*). *A-himsa* (non-violence) does not refer to a *passive situation* of refraining from doing any violence or harm; it is rather an *active approach*, as evident from the numerous sayings of Gandhi on *ahimsa*.

In the light of the analysis of the two terms—*advaita* and *aletheia*—with the negative prefix 'a-', we can find a primordial meaning for *a-himsa* (non-violence) that transcends the either/or of the logical opposites. If *a-himsa* were to be taken as the logical opposite of *himsa* (violence), it would have meant a passive inaction. But Gandhi spares no effort to highlight that *a-himsa* is not a powerless weapon of the weakling,

44 In the language of Heidegger revealing and concealing are 'the same' (*das Selbe*) but not 'the identical' (*das Gleiche*).

45 We are using here an expression of Derrida, 'différance' for which the inspiration was Heidegger. Contemporary Western philosophy is increasingly becoming a philosophy of *difference*.

but a powerful instrument of the courageous. *Ahimsa* is bravery; it is fearlessness; it is not a sign of weakness, it is rather a sign of strength. *Ahimsa* is the power of the soul; it is the soul-force. It is an activity of the brave and strong, and not of the cowards. One cannot practice *ahimsa* and be a coward at the same time. The practice of *ahimsa* calls forth the greatest courage.[46] In the words of Martin Luther King Jr., *ahimsa* is a "dynamically aggressive spirituality."[47] There is thus 'violence' in non-violence, but a violence with a difference; and it is directed against *evil* rather than against the persons who are under the grip of evil.

Where does one get the *power* in non-violence? It is Truth (*satya*), on which non-violence is based, and to which it moves on—*satya* is the 'whence' and the 'whither' of *ahimsa*. In Gandhian thought truth and non-violence, *satya* and *ahimsa*, are closely linked. He says: "The more I search after Truth the more I feel it is all-inclusive. Truth is not covered by non-violence. But I often experience that non-violence is included in truth."[48] Standing on the solidity of Truth, which Gandhi identifies with God, one gets the courage to be non-violently violent, peacefully aggressive! "To me God is Truth and Love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness. God is the source of Light and Life and yet He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist."[49] Truth as God encompasses every religion (even atheism) and every morality. There is no higher religion or morality than Truth. Thus when one *holds fast to Truth* (*satyagraha*), one becomes really powerful and courageous to be non-violent. Standing by truth and in truth, one becomes non-violent.

The point that we would like to highlight here is this: *a-himsa* has a primordial meaning that transcends and embraces violence and

46 Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 84: 372.

47 Matrin Luther King Jr., "Nonviolence and Racial Justice" in *The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.*, James M. Washington, ed., (New York: HarperCollins, 1986), 7.

48 M.K. Gandhi, *In Search of the Supreme* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1961), 15.

49 M.K. Gandhi, *My God* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing Company, 1962, Reprint: 1994), 8.

non-violence; it is thus both powerfully courageous and peacefully tolerant. Only insofar as one dwells in the home of Truth, one can attain the moral and spiritual power of non-violence.

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A-himsa is the weapon of the morally and spiritually strong and courageous. It is one's commitment to truth that makes non-violence so powerful. It is one's *courage* and *fearlessness*, emerging from one's commitment to truth, that gives one the 'energy' and 'power' to follow the way of non-violence in total *freedom*. Those who resort to violence are, in fact, weak and frightened. When one is weak and empty, one is prone to use violent means. *Ahimsa* can be practiced only by those who are really strong with a moral strength, which calls for openness to truth, integrity of character and union with the Absolute.

CHALLENGE OF COMMUNICATING MAHATMA GANDHI
In the Digital Era of Today

George Plathottam, sdb[1]



Abstract: *The essay explores efforts to promote the message of Mahatma Gandhi at a time when we are witnessing serious erosion of ethical values in public life. Time distances us from Gandhi and his precepts. The young people in particular today are under the impact of a digital communication revolution marked by widespread use of social media. There is also a resurgence of right wing fundamentalism and even the glorification of Gandhi's assassin and his ideology. There is a conscious and systematic effort to destroy the pluralistic, secular character of our country. In this context there is a great need to inculcate in people the values of Gandhi. The paper examines some of the praiseworthy efforts made to promote the teachings of Gandhi. Even his most virulent critics cannot deny the honesty and integrity of his life, his tenacity to truth, his fearlessness and other values he represented. It is the responsibility of all leaders,*

1 This paper is intended to pay tribute to Prof. A. Pushparajan—someone who tried to emulate the principles and teachings of Gandhi. I write this paper as an expression of my gratitude and appreciation for him. I gratefully remember his constant support and encouragement, and scholarly guidance in my study of Christian mission and communication. I offer this paper as an expression of my gratitude to one of my memorable teachers, one who combines knowledge, faith and action, teaching and praxis. I chose to write on Mahatma Gandhi, because Prof Pushparajan is a thoroughbred Gandhian, in whom we are able to have a glimpse of Gandhian values concretely lived.

educators and parents to Instill Gandhian values in children and youth. Digital technology and social media and other means of communication can be effectively engaged to disseminate the message of Gandhi. Gandhiji often said, "My life is my message." The best way to emulate his example is by constantly striving to imbue his values and faithfully teaching them to others. The essay underlines the indispensible role of communication media and the challenge of engaging them effectively to disseminate the values of Mahatma Gandhi.

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1. Gandhi in the Digital Age

This paper examines some of the efforts being made to promote Gandhian values and explores the urgency and the challenge of communicating Gandhi and his message in the modern digital era. As time takes us away from the historical era of Gandhi, there is the danger of Gandhi being relegated to the past, his ideals and values being forgotten, his message being turned to archival material and lessons on him confined to text books. For many his ideology has been reduced to mere symbolism and tokenism, a lip service. The paper also briefly examines some of the ideologies that threaten and attempt to destroy Gandhian thought and values today. A generation that is historically distant from Mahatma Gandhi should not fall prey to the false propaganda and hate communication that is becoming more pronounced especially on the social media. We should not lose sight of the perennial values of Satyagraha, non-violence, tolerance, ethics, spirituality and communal harmony that Gandhi lived, taught and laid down his life for. In today's digital age of selfies, social media and instant communication, it is necessary to explore new avenues and how to engage them more effectively to communicate Gandhi. The digital platform offers new and creative ways to promote Gandhian values today. We also need to critically examine the traditional media and distinguish between a major section of today's mainstream media primarily interested in profit on the one hand, and the people-centred, ethical and socially responsible media rooted in values and the integral development of people on the other. Gandhiji, having devoted himself assiduously to the journalistic profession, had clear views on the purpose and mission of the media, particularly the press—the dominant medium of his day.

There are obvious indications that today Gandhian thought and principles are being relegated to the past. To a great extend they are being ignored in our education, public discourse and conduct. Our politics, policies and public behaviour are not often governed by the values Gandhi proposed. Quite often they are in opposition to them. It is essential that we make all out efforts to eschew attempts to obfuscate the 'Mahatma' and his message under the shadow of a distorted and narrow portrayal of Gandhi. Much of the criticism against Gandhi emanates from a partial reading of him or viewing his thought through a narrow prism and not as a whole. Judging Gandhi out of the historical context in which he lived would be not being fair to him. We cannot judge Gandhi with today's yardsticks without giving attention to the socio-cultural, political, religious and economic factors that shaped him and his worldview. Even if one were to differ from Gandhi on particular issues or the specific nature of his methods, one cannot fail to acknowledge the import of his message, the perennial value of the methods he adopted and proposed and their universal appeal and relevance. It is not so much that Gandhi needs to be kept alive for his sake; it is that we need his teachings to add meaning and direction to our lives. Honouring Gandhi today must mean, therefore, striving to promote Gandhian precepts among the masses, particularly among the young.

It is therefore necessary to explore newer ways of communicating Gandhian philosophy in the various sectors of public life—education, politics, media, public service, religion, business and industry. Writing on Gandhi in 1949, George Orwell in his own inimitable way said: "One may feel, as I do, a sort of aesthetic distaste for Gandhi, one may reject the claims of sainthood made on his behalf (he never made any such claim himself, by the way), one may also reject sainthood as an ideal and therefore feel that Gandhi's basic aims were anti–human and reactionary; but regarded simply as a politician, and compared with the other leading political figures of our time, how clean a smell he has managed to leave behind!"[2]

2 George Orwell, 1949, 'Reflections on Gandhi' First published: Partisan Review. GB, London. January, 1949 http://www.orwell.ru/library/reviews/gandhi/english/e_gandhi

2. Vilification of Gandhi and Glorification of his Assassin

We are currently witnessing how Gandhi's assassin is being glorified covertly and overtly; books and dramas on him are being published, and attempts are on to label Naturam Godse, the man who shot and killed him, a kind of cult hero, even attempts to make temples in his honour and regard him as a patriot, to put up his statue and erect temples in his memory. He is being hailed as a martyr and hero. The ideological moorings of the man who assassinated Gandhi are being given much credence in the politics of the day. Gandhi, while alive as well as now, is not only loved and admired, but criticized and vilified. He is not only called the *Mahatma*, but also called a fanatic, a bigot, an utopian and an idealist, a person who did not oppose caste system in Hinduism, nor the *Manusmriti* which is blamed for promoting caste divisions. There are numerous hate postings on the internet and Gandhi is abused and vilified in the new digital technological platforms.[3] Others criticize his South African days saying he never worked for the Blacks nor associated with them. He is accused of being a friend of the British and other Europeans.[4] He is portrayed as a man of prejudice and preferences. Some of his critics refuse to give him credit for Satyagraha and non-violence he promoted, saying these were already in existence, and that Gandhi only adopted these methods. The challenge of communicating Gandhian precepts and inculcating his values become all the more imperative at a time when communal hatred and vituperous ideologies are showing up their ugly head.

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3 There are several postings on the internet that spew hatred against Gandhi. The following are a few such invectives against Gandhi on the internet: we can't ignore his sacrifice also he [has] shown a different side of patriotism....” I hate extremism but godse has done good thing by killing the swine ghandu gandhi is pakka harami ravan tha. godse is bhagwan ram. jai sri ram.”… “.. Proud of you Nathuram Godse!..hats off godse sir” “…great speech great Hindi great Hindu deshbhkti ki misal ho aap…He did good job. U will always be in our heart Great Godse Sir...proud of Godse sir..N R Godse is Great Thinking Godse, Why I Assassinated Mahatma Gandhi, 1993…”

4 A.T.M. Abdullahel Shafi, “True Lies: The Myths and Realities about Mahatma Gandhi.” The article is critical of Gandhi. The author is a professor is Bangladesh and is currently a Master's Student at the Institute of Sociology, University of Heidelberg, Germany. (Source: http://www.karmayog.org/newslettersofNGOs/newslettersofNGOs_6521.htm).

Gandhi and the *Mahatma*: they are the same; but we need to look at them as though they are two distinct entities. There indeed is a lot of difference between the two. Gandhi—the man is a historical person, a Gujarati gentleman, rooted in his Hindu religious tradition, faith and values, a citizen of our country who passionately yearned and worked for the freedom of the nation and its people. He is also the *Mahatma*—a title bestowed on him by the people because of his pre-eminence in leading the struggle for India's independence, for upholding the supreme value of truth, for being a man of non-violence, detachment and sincerity of purpose. As *Mahatma* or great soul, he continues to inspire and live on in the hearts of millions. But the historical Gandhi as we know evolved over a long period of time in different cultural and political contexts. He had his education in England. He worked in South Africa, where he tested and put to practice many of his ideas. These experiences opened before him various realities of the world and influenced the shaping of his philosophy. In addition Gandhi possessed a great deal of self awareness than most others. As Bhattacharya observes, Gandhi "possessed a hundred mirrors in which to see what was happening deep within him... It was history that chiseled continuously the incomplete, uncertain Gandhian image."[5] But even today Gandhian values stand out to us too like a mirror to examine our beliefs and conduct.

The *Mahatma* has outlived and transcended his historical times. He now belongs to posterity. His values have been universally accepted. They have inspired many world leaders to launch non-violent struggles; they have given birth to movements and institutions centred on peace and harmony. Whether loved or admired, lauded or vilified, one cannot deny the way the world has recognized him. He enjoys a pre-eminence few can claim. Nations and leaders and people in all walks of life continue to repose faith in the values, beliefs, precepts and philosophy of life which he has bequeathed. In that sense Gandhiji continues to be alive in our midst, and he transcends his historical time and space and belongs to the whole world. His message has not only outlived the man but continues to be relevant today.

5 Bhabani Bhattacharya, *Gandhi the Writer* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1969), 79-80.

3. Rise of Fundamentalism

Soon after Gandhi was assassinated there was near unanimity that the ideology of the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak (RSS) and the fundamentalist ideology that prompted Godse to carry out the assassination represented a serious threat to the fledgling nation, to the freedom for which Gandhi and thousands of others had fought. RSS was banned for a while. Many leaders warned of the danger of rightwing fundamentalism that would eat up India's secular democratic fabric. Those who made such prophetic warning were pooh-poohed as anti-nationals and pseudo-secularists. But their prediction seems to have not been misplaced. What surprises is that there is a new belligerence and bravado that continue to cut at the root of India's secular and pluralistic identity. Not only are some of the core beliefs and values Gandhi stood for being challenged, but we are also witnessing the glorification of his assassin and the ideology that prompted him to carry out the heinous act. There is also a deliberate and purpose driven effort to pit India's first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru against the first Home Minister Sardar Vallabhai Patel by blowing up differences of opinion or viewpoints giving them the colour of fierce controversies or to claim the legacy of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.[6]

6 *The Times of India*, Hindu Mahasabha to go ahead with 'Godse temple' plan; *The Hindu*, December 25, 2014 18:35 IST Hindu Mahasabha performs 'Bhumi pujan' for Godse temple in Meerut; The Marathi language play *Me Nathuram Godse Boltoy* (This is Nathuram Godse Speaking), first staged in 1997, was produced from Godse's point of view; The 2000 film '*Hey Ram*' briefly touches upon events related to the assassination; *Gandhi Vadh aur Main* (Gandhi Hatya Aani Me), by Gopal Godse (1967); '*May It Please Your Honor*,' published by Surya Bharti, India, (2003)—the play based upon the book was banned; *Why I Assassinated Mahatma Gandhi*, published by Surya Bharti (1993); *Nine Hours to Rama*, Stanley A. Wolpert (1962); Hindu Mahasabha plans Godse temple to revere Gandhi killer, *India Today* in New Delhi, December 25, 2014; The Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha's Lucknow chapter plans to lay the foundation stone of the temple for Akhand Bharat Mata where an idol of Nathuram Godse will also be kept. Kamlesh Tiwari claims that the land on which the temple will come up belongs to him; although the local administration says it is disputed. Tiwari claims that he has the support of local villagers as well as a host of people from different states who will all converge at the Para

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led government is building a huge monument to Patel in Gujarat. Efforts to discredit Nehru and his secularism with pseudo-patriotism as propounded by the BJP and its ideological mentor, the Singh Parivar, is like the kettle calling the pot black. Falsified and motivated history lessons are masquerading as truth and are increasingly appearing even in the text books our children study.

Patriotism cannot be reduced to mere jingoism and shouting of slogans like 'Bharat Mata ki jai,' or 'Vande mataram,' or judged by the food one eats or the religion one practices, or the place where one worships. What we need is not a paste up culture of plastic patriots but genuine patriots who are willing to lay down their lives rather than those who beat up others and undertake cultural policing under the pretext of nationalism and love for the country. One cannot claim to possess love for the country by unleashing violence or instilling hatred against one's countrymen.

Gandhiji wrote extensively on a variety of issues. His position on all issues need not be acceptable to all. His stature as *Mahatma* will not be diminished because there is lack of consensus on his vision for the development of India and on the methodology he proposed or on other issues. Many of his proposals are to be seen in the historical context in which they were made. Instead of blindly following them, we need to critically examine them and adapt them. Seven decades after India's independence, it is becoming increasingly obvious that Gandhi was a prophet who foresaw what would happen to India in the years to come. No doubt, Gandhi was also an idealist and some of his ideas were utopian. But even his most virulent critics cannot question his right intention, the honesty and integrity of his life, his tenacity to truth, his fearlessness and other values he represented. Like many other great leaders he admired, Gandhiji paid with his life for the inner

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village in Sidhauli area of Sitapur on January 30 next year. Earlier in the month, BJP MP Sakshi Maharaj stirred a huge controversy when he called Godse a nationalist and a patriot. In October, a Malayalam mouthpiece of the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* had said that Nathuram Godse should have killed former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and not Gandhi.

freedom, the values and convictions he stood for. George Bernard Shaw, a friend and admirer of Gandhi, on hearing of the assassination of the Mahatma exclaimed, "It is dangerous to be good." Gandhiji truly deserves to be honoured as a martyr of our nation. On hearing of his assassination, Pandit Nehru said: "A Light has gone out of our lives." He was like a beacon light. But Gandhi did not appear in the Indian sky like a bolt from the blue; he evolved over the years, and he was a child of his own times. Bhattacharya has observed:

> Gandhi grew up not too fast. His life was marked all through by unhurried evolution. It was a compulsion of his inner nature that he would have to be perpetually, ceaselessly reassessing his ideals and values. No wonder that at different stages of his life, he seemed to contradict himself. He was not afraid to do so. He would calmly admit of 'Himalayan blunders,' descend to the foothills, and begin the steep ascent over again.[7]

4. Timelessness of Gandhian Values

In the age of selfies (which manifests a growing degree of narcissism) studying Gandhi and his precepts, inculcating them in the minds of the young may not come naturally. Leaders, educators and parents need to develop strategies to instill Gandhian values in the growing generation. Road rages kill thousands of people. Pavement dwellers and homeless children are increasingly becoming part of the reckless urban landscape of India. People are in great hurry, be it in the streets, malls or metro transports. There is increasing impatience bordering on rage, leading to violence. There is little sensitivity to the girl child and women, the poor, the socially and economically marginalized. Dalits continue to be victims of atrocities of all sorts in a country that boasts of a glorious past and wants to be a global player. Gandhian values are rooted in the noble tenets of major religions. The values of love, forgiveness, non-violence, are the most needed values to foster our civilization. Satyagraha, civil disobedience, mass mobilization for the common good are more relevant today than ever.

7 Bhattacharya, 79.

Gandhiji's message is universal, timeless and invaluable. It is precisely because of its rootedness in the values of the great religious leaders like Buddha, Jesus Christ, or luminaries like Leo Tolstoy, Henry David Thoreau, John Ruskin, and scriptures like Bhagavad Gita, the Bible. Drawing from such diverse sources, Gandhian values have assumed universal appeal. Gandhian precepts are not limited by space or time; one cannot affix an expiry date on to Gandhian precepts. However, the challenge of making them relevant for different contexts is a task we ought to undertake with utmost seriousness. Gandhi was a prolific writer and wrote extensively on a variety of issues ranging from politics, religion, ethics and morality, service and selflessness. His writings—some 48,000 pages in 98 volumes of collected works reflect the visionary, mystic, author, teacher, moralist, humanitarian, the man who was an abiding witness to truth, non-violence and freedom.

5. Gandhi beyond Frontiers

Gandhi belongs to the whole world and has transcended the narrow confines of nation or race or even religion. The political grand-standing of some of our netas who have criminal records and corruption charges against them, who nevertheless don starched Gandhian khadi in public, need to be viewed with caution if not scorn. It is only an act of dishonour; their words of praise for Gandhian value a mere lip service, sometimes downright hypocrisy. Ben Kingsly, who acted as Gandhi in Richard Attenborough's film 'Gandhi,'[8] lived the daily regimen of Gandhi before he acted in the film. It is necessary that all political parties should assume responsibility to see that their members are not permitted to wear the Gandhian khadi or the topi named after him, nor allow them to address rallies and speak at functions commemorating Gandhi if they have criminal or corruption charges against them. Only leaders who pledge to follow his precepts in some way at least, if not wholly, should be permitted to offer floral tributes at his Samadhi or at

8 Richard Attenborough's film 'Gandhi' is a 1982 epic biographical film which dramatizes the life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Gandhi was written by John Briley and produced and directed by Richard *Attenborough.* Sir Ben Kingsley (born Krishna Bhanji; 31 December 1943) is an award winning English actor, who has Indian ancestory. He is known for his starring role as Mohandas Gandhi in the 1982 film *Gandhi*, for which he won the Academy Award for Best Actor.

his statues. They should also be encouraged to take an oath pledging to follow Gandhian values.

People should boycott those who invoke Gandhi without practicing at least a modicum of what he stood for. The corrupt and the greedy politician or the bureaucrat does not hesitate to invoke Gandhi's name merely for the gallery. Those who would like to invoke his name and engage in public acts would do well to undertake a fast or voluntary manual labour to serve the poor. They should also abstain from alcohol, acts involving violence or crime or any corrupt practice. If civilians can be banned from donning army fatigues for fear of misusing them, why not forbid corrupt politicians and netas with criminal background from wearing Gandhian dress and invoking his name in public places. Do not gullible citizens have the right to be forewarned about them?

Gandhiji, under so many names like 'Bapu' or 'Mahatma,' continue to inspire children and youth. This is evident in the way school children and sometimes even adults dress up like him for fancy dress or parades on occasions like the Independence Day, Republic Day or the anniversaries of Gandhi. Cartoons and art depictions on Gandhi too abound. Children should be encouraged to develop certain level of knowledge of Gandhi—his life and teachings. They should be helped to imbibe some of his values as a preparation for such representations.

Gandhi believed in total freedom and emancipation from every kind of bondage. He wrote: "My ambition is much higher than independence. Through the deliverance of India, I seek to deliver the so-called weaker races of the earth from the crushing heels of western exploitation."[9] He demanded selfless service and 'action without attachment' whatever be the cost. Truth was paramount in his method. "To me nothing but truth has any interest. I am convinced that the country can never benefit by untruth." There was no room in his philosophy for violence in any form. He wrote in *Young India*, no country has ever risen without being purified through the fire of suffering. The mother suffers so that her child may live. The condition of wheat-growing is that the seed grain should perish. Life comes

9 Bhattacharya, 80.

out of death... Progress is to be measured by the amount of suffering undergone by the sufferer. The purer the suffering the greater is the progress.[10]

It took many years for Gandhi to evolve his idea of Satyagraha. It was his own ingenious contribution to the world. Satyagraha is not mere passive resistance but a moral force founded on truth and fearlessness. Gandhi declared that Satyagraha is not 'infliction of suffering on the opponent but on one's own self.' This concept was rooted in fearlessness. As Bhattacharya observes: the historic development of satyagraha in India "brought a new field of investigation into the realm of political science. Truth force, as Gandhi conceived, has two essential composites: infinite capacity for suffering and complete non-violence not in word alone but also in thought and word."[11] For Gandhi, truth is what the voice within tells you. Truth, the sovereign principle, includes numerous other principles. "I worship God as Truth only."[12] The theme is often repeated in his writings. "Rather than say that God is Truth, I should say that Truth is God... It is the living embodiment of God, it is the only life, and I identify Truth with the fullest life." I worship the God that is Truth or Truth which is God through the service of these millions.[13]

Satyagraha was not a weapon of the weak. It called for strict discipline and code of conduct. It is not directed towards the opponent's fear but to his conscience. He was to be converted, not coerced.[14] Former Secretary General of the United Nations, U Thant, wrote: "Gandhiji believed that non-violent methods employed in key areas could achieve more enduring results than those obtained by the use of force. It was important to him that the results should be achieved by peaceful means because the means were as significant as the end itself... he did not believe that a noble end could be achieved by ignoble means. To him the means merged in the end, and the end sanctified rather than

10 *Young India*, July 16, 1919.
11 Bhattacharya, 96.
12 M.K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, xv.
13 *Young India*, (August 4, 1927), 248.
14 *Harijan*, (March 25, 1939), 64.

justified the means."[15] Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in 1935: "He instilled courage and manhood into the people of India and disciplined endurance, and the power of joyful discipline for a cause, and, with all his humility, pride."[16]

Gandhi once said, 'In the midst of darkness, light persists.' Gautama Buddha, preaching his dynamic gospel of reverence for all life, could have spoken those words. Jesus Christ also preached boundless love of one's enemies. They too touched a few hearts during their lifetime. But the contemporary rejection of the teachings of Gautama Buddha and Jesus Christ was not the final word in history. The light did persist until it dispelled big chunks of darkness. And to return to Gandhi, could we today bluntly reject the hope, even if it cannot be honestly affirmed, that the story may repeat itself in our own time? U Thant, deeply aware of all the pressures that compose violence in our time, wrote:

> Gandhi's philosophy, to me, has a meaning and significance far beyond the confines of his country or of his time. Many of his principles have universal application and eternal validity, and I hope the passing years will show that his faith in the efficacy of non-violent pressure as an agent for peaceful change is as justified today all over the world as it was in his times in India.[17]

6. Reinvigorating Gandhian Spirit

Gandhian thought and ideology have no expiry date; they are perennial and relevant in our day. Even those who want to write the obituary of Gandhian principles need to admit their universal relevance today. Gandhi was no weakling. In paying tributes to Lokmanya Tilak, Gandhi wrote: "Let us erect for the only Lokmanya of India an imperishable monument by weaving into our lives his bravery, his simplicity, his wonderful industry and his love for his country."[18] His resoluteness during the freedom struggle was expressed in the words: "This is a fight to the finish." The spirit of India "will neither

15 U Thant, in *Mahatma Gandhi*: *100 Years*, ed., S. Radhakrishnan, 372.

16 Bhattacharya, 100.

17 Ibid., 103.

18 *Young India*, (July 28, 1920).

bend nor break." He coined the phrase "Do or die." But he moderated these with the need for humility and trust in God. "I shall only hope and pray that God will give India sufficient humility and strength to remain non-violent to the end."[19]

Navajivan became a powerful instrument in continuing the teachings of Gandhi by publishing his books and literature, spreading Gandhian thought and ideals. In 1950, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, a trustee, obtained for the Navajivan Trust a piece of land near Gujarat Vidyapith, the university that the Mahatma had started in 1920, to house its printing press and office. By the turn of the millennium, the trust, the press and the building looked well past their glorious days; a relic as rusty, many said, as the idea of Gandhi and his ideals. It had no connect and seemingly even little to do with the generations born over the last 50 years. But in recent times there have been major changes for the good. True to its name the Navajivan Trust received a rebirth. Today the website of the trust provides details of e-books; certain Navajivan titles are available on Amazon; there's a new photo gallery of Gandhi with many rare photographs in the building; a new library, and a modern press churning out quality books on, by and about the Mahatma.[20]

Modernization also meant enhancement of quality and increase in prices. In the past Navajivan books were inexpensive but today they cost more. Printed with superior fonts on better paper, their quality has improved. "People today do not want cheap; they want good quality," says Vivek Desai, managing trustee of Navajivan, the man credited with the facelift to the trust. Currently the financial situation of the trust has improved. The trust's annual turnover is close to Rs 4 crore, about 30 per cent increase in sales coming from the e-book segment. There are many efforts being made to draw people to Gandhi's message, which include creation of a slick restaurant at the Navajivan building. Based on Gandhian ideas, aptly named Karma Cafe, it offers Indian snacks on weekdays and lunch and dinner on weekends. The food is organic, and the mode of payment truly Gandhian—drop what

19 Bhattacharya, 200.

20 Uday Mahurkar, August 13, 2015, http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/navajivan-trust-mahatma-gandhi-selfie-generation/1/458357.html

you like in a box after eating. And yet, the cafe reports an average monthly profit of Rs 40,000. On the new efforts Desai says: "We introduced the art gallery concept to attract the youth. We have also created space for artists to sit and work on their themes. We will soon introduce an outlet, Sattwa, to sell ethnic articles, including khadi." Here, too, Navajivan sticks to the organic concept and source as much as possible directly from the potters and artisans, in keeping with the Mahatma's village development concept.

What may be considered a major achievement of Navajivan is to bring back Gandhi among the youth. That interest can be judged from the fact that when Navajivan made e-books on Mahatma free for one month in February last year as part of its strategy to get readers hooked, it saw hundreds of thousands of downloads from as many as 67 countries. Navajivan's refreshing efforts to promote Mahatma's core philosophy is considered essential to connect Gandhi with the new generation. Kanti Patel, 91, a Gandhian and sculptor who lived with the Mahatma in Wardha for nine days in the 1940s and recently had a statue of Gandhi installed at the trust building's entrance, said: "Gandhiji never objected to change, provided it was meaningful to society. Had he been alive, he would have welcomed Navajivan's transformation." He might have even smiled at the youths taking selfies at the Navajivan Trust with Kanti Patel's sculpture in the background. This, after all, is the section of Indians for which the Mahatma took over as editor of *Navajivan* and *Young India*.[21]

Another new and creative initiative has come from Leo Burnett India, an ad agency, to keep Gandhi alive and relevant in the hearts and minds of youngsters in India. In 2010 Burnett created and launched a special font in memory of the Mahatma to commemorate Bapu's 141st birthday by bringing alive his values of truth and non-violence.[22] The font which could be downloaded is the creative contribution of Burnett India's national creative director KV Sridhar. He crafted an alphabetical font in the Devanagari script that has the trademark Gandhi glasses subtly incorporated into every letter. Through

21 Ibid.

22 Devina Joshi, "Why Leo Burnett Is 'Fontly' Remembering Gandhiji," www.gandhijifont.com

Gandhiji's glasses which symbolize 'vision' the artists try to bring alive his visionary thoughts. “The way he saw the world is completely different from the way we do, and hence the glasses, to subtly nudge people into thinking like him again,” Sridhar said. The font also attempts to popularize Gandhiji's quotes and teachings among the younger generation. Burnett chose digital as the primary medium in an effort to be relevant to youngsters. A website, www.gandhijifont.com, has been launched, which allows visitors the chance to download six posters containing one of the sayings of Bapu each, which can then be saved or put up as wallpapers or screensavers.

The website explains why it is important to remember Bapu and how to incorporate his teachings to improve one's day-to-day life. The site contains various innovations. For example, on clicking the image of the glasses, different parts of it will fly off to become parts of the font, forming ‘mantras’ and letters of the alphabet. The site also contains a message board where people can specify which Gandhi saying they would like on their own poster, and a personalized Gandhi font encrypted saying will be sent to their email address. Further, on downloading the font, users can make their own Gandhi sayings and proverbs and use it for other purposes such as writing nameplates.

These fonts are also promoted on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and other social networking platforms, where people can download and share it with each other. Plans are also on to allow Facebook users the option of having their profile pages transformed entirely with the Gandhi font. There are also plans to have search engines such as Google to enable their home pages to be transformed by the font for Gandhi Jayanti and other important days related to him. Certain print media are also being encouraged to use the font to publish articles on Bapu on the day of his birth. There shall also be merchandise creation and sale using the font, including postcards, mugs and T-shirts. Burnett is working closely with various NGOs and to promote the font. Downloading of the font may even help in revenue generation for NGOs. According to the Burnett team, for anyone who wants to start a revolution of his own using just Gandhiji's words, this font would be a fitting accomplice.[23]

23 Ibid.

In order to promote Gandhian legacy, there should be other programmes and strategies to spread the message of Gandhi through youth camps, study sessions, community service activities. Youth should be encouraged to take pledges at his Samadhi or at other memorable places to work for the welfare of the nation, to keep India clean, corruption free, to fight superstition, to end atrocities against Dalits, women and the other vulnerable sections of society. Youth should be engaged in literacy projects, cleanship campaigns, community farming programmes. In this age of digital technology and social media, efforts should be made to engage communication media more effectively. The various mass media units of the Government of India like radio, television, films, song and drama should be utilised with greater purpose to communicate the message of Gandhi. It may be noted that the public sector media are engaged in schemes like recording oral history from Gandhiji's contemporaries still alive, which would be used by AIR on appropriate occasions.

Efforts are also being made to collect, compile, and furnish suitable materials on Gandhi and make them available to the press and other organisations and individuals requiring such material. Governments must make strenuous efforts towards eradication of social evils like alcoholism, total elimination of employing human labour in scavenging work. Literature and posters, folders and pamphlets containing the teachings of Gandhi should be popularised.

7. Role of Media in Promoting Gandhian Values

Gandhiji who spent considerable part of his public life in editing and publishing newspapers and writing regular columns, knew the indispensible role of the press and newspapers. Gandhi said 'Newspapers are meant primarily to educate people, and apprise them of current trends in the history of the world. This is responsible work.' He insisted that the newspapers should not publish news until its truth is definitely established. 'It is generally seen that the newspapers publish any matter they have without regard to its need or importance just to fill vacant spaces. It is so in the West. The reason is most newspapers have an eye on profits. There is no doubt that newspapers have done great service to people and these defects are

therefore overlooked. But to my mind then they have done equally great harm. He insisted that the newspapers should speak the truth without fearing the country's laws and if newspapers are not able to do so they should pull down their shutters.[24]

Gandhi observed that the established practice of newspapers was to derive income from advertisements rather than subscribers. He observed that the newspapers published advertisements of drinks and at the same time wrote editorials against drinking. Ill effects of smoking are communicated by the newspaper and at the same time the same newspaper carries advertisements of tobacco brands. Gandhi said, "...We must either put an end to this undesirable practice or at least reform it. It is the duty of each newspaper to exercise care in accepting advertisements for publication in its pages."[25]

Promotion of communal harmony and values of peace can be furthered through audiovisual media such as drama, folk dance, mobile exhibitions, street plays, song and music etc. Gandhi centenary saw a series of efforts to promote his ideas on national integration. Instead of making them as occasional commemorative events, students in schools and colleges should receive them as part of their academic programme as well as extra-curricular activities. There are several institutions which carry the distinct stamp of Gandhian values and principles. These include ashrams like Sabarmati in Ahmedabad, various museums, study centers, publishing houses etc. In accordance with the recommendations of an Evaluation Committee after the centenary celebrations, steps are being taken to reorient Gandhi Museums. Gandhi Bhavans and Gandhi Corners are planned to be set up in universities and other educational institutions. Kits on Gandhiji consisting of photographs, pictures, books by Gandhiji and on him, Photostats of his letters, busts of his films, tape-records of his speeches, etc., are being manufactured. These kits will be suitable for circulation in educational institutions and universities in India and abroad.

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24 Radheshyam Jadhav, "M. K. Gandhi's Satyagrahi Model of Journalistic Ethics," in *Language in India*, www.languageinindia.com 12: 12 December.

25 Ibid.

Gandhiji used journalism as a tool to achieve freedom and to help build society. He had clear ideas on the role of the press and other media in communicating with the masses. He gave new interpretations of the press and journalism and frequently used expressions like 'sharing,' participation,' 'association,' 'fellowship' to describe the media profession. Gandhi was a prolific writer. He wrote regular columns in his papers, besides books, leaflets and numerous letters. These include *Young India*, *Harijan*, *Hind Swaraj* (Indian Home Rule), *Indian Opinion*, and his autobiographical volumes like *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, *Seven Social Sins*. Within a few years after his return from South Africa, Gandhi was well and truly at the heart of the freedom struggle. In 1919, Gandhi launched the Gujarati magazine, *Navajivan*; he was already editing the weekly *Young India* in English. Both, along with the magazine *Harijan* and Gandhi's many books, were published from *Navajivan Mudranalaya* (press) in what is now called the Old City in Ahmedabad. He was also an avid reader. The books and authors who influenced him most were 'A Letter to a Hindu,' *Bhagavad Gita*, Henry David Thoreau's essay 'Civil Disobedience Fasting,' *Harishchandra*, John Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, Leo Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is within You*, *The Masque of Anarchy*, Muhammad, 'Sermon on the Mount,' *Shravan*, *Shrimad Rajchandra,* etc.

Besides using various communication modes and media like intra-personal, interpersonal, group communication and also verbal and non-verbal symbolic communication, Gandhi successfully used the newspaper as a powerful weapon to communicate. Gandhi was closely associated with *Indian Opinion*, *Young India*, *Navjivan* and in later part of his life with *Harijan*, *Harijanbandhu*, and *Harijansevak* in English, Gujarati and Hindi, respectively. Gandhi was an effective communicator-journalist as receivers of his message believed in his words as he was the embodiment of what he preached. His strongest weapon of Satyagraha, he applied as a parameter to his own life as mass leader and journalist communicator. Gandhi's concept of Satyagraha is an integrated concept and includes truth, non-violence, non-stealing, chastity or brahmacharya, poverty or non-possession, bread labour, fearlessness, control of the palate (*asvada*), tolerance,

swadeshi and removal of untouchability—basically a self restrained life style model for an individual Satyagrahi.[26]

8. Spirituality in Gandhi's Satyāgrahi Communication

'Spirituality is not a matter of knowing scriptures and engaging in philosophical discussions. It is a matter of heart culture, of immeasurable strength...' said Gandhi.[27] Spirituality is at the centre of the Gandhian ritual communication. For every Satyāgrahi in India, Gandhi had set essential qualifications like s/he must have living faith in God. He believed that the divine powers within a human being are infinite and man is neither mere intellect nor animal body, nor heart or soul alone. 'A proper and harmonious combination of all the three is required for the making of a whole man' said Gandhi.[28] 'We shall not tread the beaten path, but explore new pathways to our goal. And what is the goal? Our goal is to establish the dignity of man. We have insulted man traditionally, in this country. That is why in spite of its wanton spirituality, we have been more often slaves than free men. Can spirituality tolerate slavery? And we have so many spiritual preceptors in our country with tremendous following! But why has our country been a country of subject people for most of its history? The answer is we have never cared for the dignity of man as man, unlabelled man. Allow me to say that our country is not a country of spirituality, but a country of religiosity. Religion is not only different from spirituality, but often, it is anti-spiritual.'[29]

For Gandhi spirituality was part of his struggle. After initially denying spirituality a role in the development now there is greater acceptance to the fact that spirituality is here to stay and it has a role to play in the development and communication process. Some of the researchers are now engaged in locating the link that binds spirituality and development. 'Our reverence for life will be an index of our outlook

26 Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal / Gandhi Book Centre [ND] A Revolutionary Mind [Online] Available from: http://www.mkgandhi.org/dharma/a.htm

27 *A Revolutionary Mind* [Online] Available from: http://www.mkgandhi.org/dharma/i.htm 27.

28 Bhattacharya, 84.

29 Bhattacharya, 86.

on life. Both science and spirituality must together help us reach that consummation. Science without spirituality is reduced to a tissue of purposeless discoveries, and spirituality without science will lose itself in the waste of unrealistic speculation…'[30]

9. Gandhian Legacy Continues

Gandhian message continues to inspire people all across the world—be it through books and columns in newspapers and radio, film and television, posters and the new social media of the day. There are numerous centres and institutions that continue to be living monuments of Gandhian precepts. They are committed to promoting Gandhi's teachings. To mention a few, they are: Gandhi Bhawan, Gandhi Mandapam, Gandhi Smriti, Gandhi Memorial, Gandhi Memorial Museum, Mahatma Gandhi schools, colleges and universities, National Gandhi Museum, Raj Ghat, Sabarmati Ashram, Satyagraha House and so on. Gandhian values have influenced many world leaders and continue to do so. Some of the most prominent ones include Dalai Lama, Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, Rajendra Prasad, Aung San Suu Kyi. Sarojini Naidu who witnessed the trial of Gandhi in a court in Ahmadabad said:

> My thoughts sped across the centuries to a different land and a different age, when a similar drama was enacted and another divine and gentle teacher was crucified, for spreading kindred gospel with kindred courage. I realized now Jesus of Nazareth furnished the only true parallel in history to this invincible apostle of Indian liberty who loved humanity with surpassing compassion and, to use his own beautiful phrase 'approached the poor with the mind of the poor.' In the face of provocation or trial, Gandhi stood untroubled, in all his transcendent simplicity, the embodied symbol of the Indian nation—its living sacrifice and sacrament in one.[31]

Conclusion

It is difficult to define Gandhi or confine him to one ideological camp or political linage. Much of what he wrote and spoke belongs

30 Ibid.

31 *The Bombay Chronicle*, March 1922, See also Padmini Sengupta, Sarojini Naidu, *A Biography* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1966), 196-70.

to the particular political or social context, the times and situations that promoted them. It is the task of institutions dedicated to his values and the government agencies that plan education to draw out the essence of Gandhian thought and values to be presented to the younger generation of our day. Gandhian values must find a place in all educational curricula of the country. Effective steps need to be evolved in ensuring that Gandhiji is taught, his writings are critically read. Gandhiji's oft quoted saying, "My life is my message" should be adopted to measure the public conduct and values of our leaders. Every effort should be made to defeat the rising trend of intolerance, bigotry and pseudo-patriotism that create a sense of insecurity and fear in the minds of a section of the people. It should be endeavour of all citizens to translate into action the Gandhian values and precepts. Children and youth should become the focus of attention in the transmission of Gandhian values. The life and teachings of Dr Pushparajan, a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ and an ardent follower of Gandhi, whom we honour through these few thoughts, stand out as a beckon of hope. May his life and witness continue to have a force-multiplying effect!

SPINNING WHEEL/INTERNET
Means for Enhancing Home-Coming!

George Pattery, sj

Abstract: *'How does one address the question of home-coming in our cyber age? Is technology a help or hindrance to genuine home-coming? Taking clue from Kulkarni's study of Gandhi's philosophy of charka, it is argued that in his own way Gandhi proposed an integral approach to technology (spinning wheel) that could provide us perspectives for NET age. Home-coming is the cosmic project of an evolving Universe through response-ability of the Humans directed by the Whole that is the within-without of everything.*

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Khadi and *charka* (hand spun cloth and spinning wheel) are archaic images, and certainly Gandhi is outdated. Why do people want to resurrect Gandhi in a post-modern discussion on home-coming when science and technology have reshaped life incredibly? This is a justifiable reaction of a techno-savvy generation; yet Gandhi could be brought into the discussion because he was 'educationist, spinner, scavenger, cobbler, cook, nurse, nature cure specialist, dietician, beekeeper, carpenter, an experimentalist, technological innovator.' These skills (technologies) of Gandhi justify his inclusion in the debate on home-coming. There is yet another deeper reason.

Technology is presenting the possibility of a trans-human phase for the humans. It is perhaps the most attractive prospectus for the humans at this point of the evolutionary journey; technology seems

to assist and augment greater consciousness. On the other hand, technology also tends to threaten the humans, estranging them from themselves. Gandhi's experiment with '*charka'* (spinning wheel) could be revisited in order to think aloud how he envisaged an integral approach to technology as a means for home-coming—the process of becoming or growing.

1. Gandhi and Einstein: Seer and Scientist in Conversation

Conversation between Gandhi and Einstein is significant to throw light on 'home-coming' from two different yet converging perspectives.

> There was unmistakable resonance between the views of Einstein and Gandhi on the science-faith relationship. Both viewed life and the universe in their totality. As Einstein affirmed: 'I maintain that the cosmic religious feeling is the strongest and noblest motive for scientific research… I want to know how God created this world. I am not interested in this or that phenomenon, in the spectrum of this or that element. I want to know His thoughts, the rest are details.[1]

In his essay, the world as I see it (1931) Einstein said: "The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science. Whoever does not know it and can no longer wonder, no longer marvel, is as good as dead, and his eyes are dimmed. It was the experience of the mystery—even if mixed with fear—that engendered religion…I am satisfied with the mystery of the eternity of life and with the awareness and a glimpse of the marvelous structure of the existing world, together with the devoted striving to comprehend a portion, be it ever so tiny, of the reason that manifests itself in nature."[2]

Bringing art, religion and science on the common platform of 'mystery,' Einstein seems to hold that true home-coming for the humans happen when 'mystery' is embraced, not as non-rational but as the point of arrival for reason. Evolutionary thinkers hold that

1 Sudheendra Kulkarni, *Music of the Spinning Wheel: Mahatma Gandhi's Manifesto for the Internet Age* (New Delhi: Amaryllis, 2012), 605.

2 Albert Einstein, *Selected Writings* (Left Word Books, 2004), 27; as quoted by Kulkarni, *Music of the Spinning Wheel*, 606.

Gandhi and Einstein represent the best of the evolutionary process. In other words, when evolution comes home, it will result in greater consciousness, resembling the 'intuitive intelligence' of these two great thinkers.

Talking about evolution, Philip Clayton writes: 'once there was no universe and then, after the Big Bang, there was an exploding world of stars and galaxies. Once the earth was unpopulated and later it was teeming with primitive life forms. Once there were apes living in trees and then there were Mozart, Einstein and Gandhi.' Commenting on this process, Ilia notes: "From galaxies to Gandhi, emergence may be a way the Big Bang repeats itself as the universe continues to unfold. At some point evolution reaches a reflexive state that generates the idea of evolution, the point of Homo Sapiens—we know that we know. We are evolution become conscious of itself."[3] Gandhi and Einstein represent the best of the human evolutionary process. Both marveled at human life and the mystery of being in their own way. Both hold that true home-coming consists in the integration of science, art and religion.

Brian Swimme says: Gravity is love. In '*The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos*,' Swimme writes: "I think that gravitational attraction is an early form of compassion or care. If there weren't that kind of care at the foundation of the universe, there would be no formation of galaxies, …when we use words like compassion, we tend to limit them to the human world….and we think of the rest of the universe as being *stuff,* and we don't use words that are spiritual or warm or emotional concerning them. I talk about compassion as a multilevel reality. It's not just something that's true of humans."[4] Gandhi had a compassionate way with the stuff of the universe and with humankind. He called it nonviolence (*ahimsa*); scientist Einstein had a way with the universe – mystery – wondering at the universe. Both explain a way of relating with the world and the universe in an integral way.

3 Ilia Delio, *The Emergent Christ: Exploring the Meaning of Catholic in an Evolutionary Universe* (New York: Orbis, 2011), 21.

4 An Interview with Brian Swimme with Susan Bridle, as quoted by Kulkarni, *Music of the Spinning Wheel*, 523.

Human beings have co-evolved with nature and will always. To be human is to be in the web of relationships; humanity can be advanced through technology, tools, artifacts, network of relationships. There is a way with technology that advances 'inter-relatedness.' We are also capable of using our compassion and our intelligence, our technology and our wealth, to make an abundant and meaningful life for every inhabitant of this planet. True home-coming consists in relating with the universe in a way that enhances compassion and mystery. Today's evolutionary findings confirm this perspective of inter-relatedenss. Carl Sagan explains the immensity of space and time: "Those worlds in space are as countless as all the grains of sand on all the beaches of the Earth. Each of those worlds is as real as ours. In every one of them, there's a succession of incidence, events, occurrences which influence its future. There exist countless worlds, numberless moments, an immensity of space and time; and in our small planet, at this moment of time and point of space, we face a critical branch-point in the history. What we do with our world, right now, will propagate down through the centuries and powerfully affect the destiny of our descendants. It is well within our power to destroy our civilization, and perhaps our species as well. If we capitulate to superstition, or greed, or stupidity, we can plunge our world into a darkness deeper than time between the collapse of classical civilization and the Italian Renaissance. But, we are also capable of using our compassion and our intelligence, our technology and our wealth, to make an abundant and meaningful life for every inhabitant of this planet, and thus to enhance enormously our understanding of the Universe and to carry us to the stars."[5]

2. Gandhi and the Spinning Wheel (Charka)

It is the genius of Gandhi that he had the uncanny knack of correlating his vision and idealism with very practical means. Gandhi's quest for truth and non-violence was a quest for harmony with oneself, world and the ultimate. He believed that transforming self was as important as transforming the world. *Charka* (spinning wheel) symbolized a

5 This clip is from Carl Sagan's Cosmos episode 8, "Journeys in Space and Time." http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLkC7ralR30

new world order based on non-violence, justice and development; it was both an ideal and a means to attain that ideal.

Today however technology is reshaping our lives, artificial intelligence stimulating human capacity to make decisions. On the one hand human capacity advances capability of machines; on the other hand machines adapt human behavior. We are told that Nanobots can be inserted into human neurons of the human brain, and thus significantly modify human behavior.[6] Humans can be reprogrammed in order to create efficient 'machines' or dangerous 'monsters.' In the emerging human consciousness new relations and partnerships are envisaged; we find new ways of coping with environment; new potentialities are emerging. Technology seems to be omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient and everlasting. One can argue just the opposite. Technology seems to tie us down to a screen, enslaved to a tool, inducing mimetic behaviours and for fleeting-moments. The dilemma of a technology-centred universe is accentuated by the fact that we humans do not know how the evolutionary change will advance.

Gandhi's discourse on 'spinning wheel' could throw some light on this dilemma. He called 'spinning wheel' sacred; that it is an exquisite piece of machinery; there is a science of spinning. "I have often said that I can do without food but not without sacrificial spinning. I have also claimed that no one in India has perhaps done his spinning with such unfailing regularity and conscientious diligence as I. And yet I will say all that by itself cannot take the place of scientific knowledge. Scientific knowledge requires constant probing into why and wherefore of every little process that you perform. Mere affirmation that in *charka* there is *swaraj* and peace is not enough."[7]

Spinning wheel is a provider of self-reliant, dignified and decentralized employment for the ordinary; it is universally available and usable. It could be owned by and used by almost all; it turns and turns, reminding us of the wheel of labour and labour of wheel. As a labour of wheel *charka* is enormously symbolic. In Gandhian scheme of things,

6 Cf., Kulkarni, *Music of the Spinning Wheel*, 176.

7 Cf., Gandhi, *Harijan*, 31 March 1946; as cited by Kulkarni, *Music of the Spinning Wheel*, 76.

everyone is invited to and expected to do 'bread labour.' Spinning wheel provides labour for everyone. The wheel represents movement and creative rendering that sustains the world. The invention of 'Wheel' provided a leap for humankind in their evolutionary journey. It increased mobility and productivity. Spinning wheel represents this mobility, availability, leisure and community that 'good technology' can provide. What if he had come across the present day 'Tablet' that enhances accessibility across the whole world and enables individuals to be independent and creative!

However *Hind Swaraj* warns of the ill effects of technology that can lead to alienation of the humans from themselves, from others and from the universe. "In it (Hind swaraj) there is NO room for machines that would displace human labour and that would concentrate power in a few hands. Labour has its unique place in a cultured human family. Every machine that helps every individual has a place. But I must confess that I have never sat down to think about what that machine can be."[8] Perhaps the closest that Gandhi had come around that machine is spinning wheel! The role of technology (including the spinning wheel) is intelligible only within the larger understanding of Gandhian perspectives on human growth and development in the context of *swadeshi* (rootedness) and *swaraj* (self-rule/freedom). Humans realize home-coming when they are genuinely rooted in a given place and time and when they can exercise true self-rule (personal and communitarian). In this vision, growth and development (both individual and communal) should happen in oceanic concentric ever-widening circles.[9] Wherever one is located in this circle, one is related to the centre and the periphery in ever-widening circle, rather than in a pyramidal style. Technology is appreciated and helpful if it helps the humans in this home-coming process. Such an ever-widening circle includes the entire cosmos and the Supreme Being. Individual

8 Antony J. Parel, *Gandhi, Hind Swaraj and Other Writings* (Cambridge University Press, 2009); as quoted by Kulkarni, *Music of the Spinning Wheel*, 521.

9 Gandhian vision of oceanic circle with numerous concentric circles of identities and interconnectivities, new relationship with the centre and the periphery…shows human's place in the universe, which is totally different from a pyramidal model.

and communal identities across the universe are interconnected and interdependent. Technology is helpful insofar as it is advancing this interconnectedness and thus enhances true home-coming.

3. Swaraj and Charka: Means for Home-Coming and a Critique of Modernity

Swa-raj understood as self-rule, referring to the individual self and the country (other entities) shares this oceanic circle perspective. The individual self (not individualism) as the soul-power follows ever-widening family of concentric circles, spreading force of compassion.[10]

This individual (self, community, nation) is handling *Charka*, is spreading this force of compassion all around, both through its agency and through the instrument of *charka*. As *charka* is a symbol of decentralized production—the spinners working at home and at their choice—it gives to millions a small degree of freedom, self-respect and self-sufficiency and multiply a wave of compassionate force;[11] it is home-coming for millions of poor people. For the rich to take up *charka* is symbol of identifying with the poor, creating emotional bond of caring for the villagers. As Kulkarni rightly points out, *charka* has a multivalent cultural role in Gandhian scheme of planning: it diversifies production; it empowers the ordinary; it brings communal harmony; it roots you in your environment; it brings soul-force in tune with productive wheel; it brings productive-wheel in harmony with soul-force; it engages one in bread-labour; *charka* stands for the inseparable link between economics and religion; it has both economic, political and religious consequences; it brings an integral approach to life.[12]

Charka embodies also a critique of modernity. "The Charka stands for simple life and high thinking. It is a standing rebuke against the modern mad rush for adding material comfort and making life so complicated as to make one unfit for knowing oneself and one's God."[13] In the context of the economic colonial war with the might of

10 Cf., Kulkarni, *Music of the Spinning Wheel*, 519-22.
11 Ibid., 61.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.

British Manchester, '*charka'* was conceived by Gandhi as the weapon of the non-violent, representing self-help, self-reliance, self-respect and freedom, of individuals and of the nation.

4. Music of Charka Enhances Home-Coming

In his conversation with Romain Rolland Gandhi used the expression 'music of the spinning wheel' to denote the integral dimension of *charka* as a machinery. In the new world order that Gandhi envisioned 'charka' stood for simple machinery that promoted human values of self-reliance, bread-labour and freedom. It provided poor villages cheap, honest and self-reliant industry. But it was more than a machine of labour. *Charka* that is derived from '*chakra'* (wheel, circle) had music in it, manifesting 'joy' of the wheel, of producing without polluting. In his conversations with Romain Rolland Gandhi actually spoke of the music of *charka*. It is the music of harmony, as the wheel turns, mind and body is in union and in creative production of something that is useful.[14] There is a flow-experience through the spinning wheel: i) it purifies the mind as the mind is engaged in turning the wheel, ii) it is a form of prayer where mind and body is in unison with the eternal wheel, iii) it is a karma yoga (work yoga) that fulfils the bread labour, v) it is the *ishtadevta*—loved deity of your life and work whereby you are in communion with God, vi) the mysticism of work through the continuous turning of the wheel brings 'liberation and support' for many people, vii) provides new ornament of khadi saree for poor women; viii) it brings harmony and prayer in village home; viii) *Charka* is *kamadhenu*—divine cow providing for many needs.[15] In short *charka* (spinning wheel) integrates music, art, economy and harmony.

The 'interpretation' of *charka* in its manifold function might sound rather intriguing for the cyber-age people. However, the interpretative value of *charka* as a technology is that technology should facilitate such integration in life, such harmony in living and thus enhance true home-coming for the humans. Through such interpretation of *charka*, Gandhi is critiquing today's technology-driven life that

14 Ibid., 172.
15 Ibid., 172-73.

brings alienation from oneself, one's neighbour and cosmos. Gandhi even said that he craved to die with his hand at the spinning wheel because it is the gateway to salvation: 'that with every thread I draw, I am spinning the destiny of India.'[16] By attributing salvation through such mundane archaic technology and by linking India's destiny to every thread that is spun, Gandhi is proposing an interpretative key to religious practices and economic theories. They should bring true integration and harmony among art, music, economy, politics and religion. Home-coming is possible through *swaraj* (self rule) which is achievable through *satyagraha* (holding fast unto truth), which in turn is enacted in *swadeshi* (rootedness) that is ever-widening oceanic circles. Spinning wheel is one such technology—archaic as it is—that seems to combine these various phases into an integrated mode.

5. Internet: the Spinning Wheel of Today?

In his well-documented study of *charka*, Sudheendra Kuklkarni interestingly argues that the vision and mission of spinning are being enacted today through internet.[17] Internet is empowering ordinary people around, both in rich and poor countries; it is democratizing wealth creation; promotes inclusive growth within countries and globally. Power of internet is accessible to all with education; (rather than the power of capital); information age is overtaking everything else. It is producing new self-confidence and ambition. Gandhian dream of equitable socio-economic growth is visible through internet. It seems to think that poverty need not be; it can be changed. He further claims that IT is realizing an important vision of Gandhi: It is ending the domination of old privileged classes by enabling new sections of society, including first generation learners, to become wealth-creators; IT has enabled large sectors of domestic manufacturing. As this trend moves into agricultural sector, Indians can make progress in economy that is resilient and sustainable. Internet enables decentralized development; Internet as the central nerve system and provides single source of identification like *aadhar card*. Knowledge is made

16 Ibid., 169.

17 Cf., Kulkarni, *Music of the Spinning Wheel*, 377ff.

universal and it now belongs to the entire human race. Internet seems to democratize every sphere of life.

Gandhi wanted spinning wheel as a means of providing self-reliant, dignified and decentralized mass employment and wealth creation. IT seems to be doing just that. Information technology is the greatest driver of decentralization. It is owned by all and accessible to all as *charka* is meant to be. World Wide Web is accessible to all; instantaneous and universal. IT is democratizing the mass media.

This is an interesting and inviting comparative interpretation. However internet and IT is not accessible to many local linguistic groups creating many discriminating policies in IT world. There is increase in cybercrimes; IT has played huge role in increasing violence and terror. Internet alienates people from one another just as it brings people together. Crime and violence are distanced through NET and gets more aggravated. Today anyone with creativity and ideas can reach the entire globe. And the opposite is also true. Anyone can be anywhere and kill anyone. Selfish, fundamentalist and in-human faces are also globalized!

If *charka* was problematic in its archaic-ness, NET is problematic in its uncontrollability. If *charka* was integral in its original vision, NET can also integrate our ways of living. Though *charka* is owned by individuals, it is not 'dangerously privatized' unlike the NET.

Heidegger interprets technology as a way of 'enframing' of the world to enhance the un-concealment of reality. NET seems to help in the enhancement of un-concealment; but it owns no responsibility. That seems to be the biggest challenge for human race and for the survival of the universe: to take responsibility for an advancing and responsible-less technology! Technology can both enable and disable the un-concealment—Home-coming or home-leaving! Technology is at the beck and call of both: the choice is left to the humans who are *able* to be *responsible* (response + able).[18]

18 Cf., Johnson Puthenpurackal, *Human Existence as Home-Coming: An Approach in Reflective Phenomenology* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2015), 190-93.

Conclusion

It seems to me that the perspective that Einstein and Gandhi shared on science-faith relationship to view the world, life and the universe in their totality is now being confirmed by evolutionary findings. That the reality is inter-dependent and inter-related in an *advaitic* (non-dualistic) relationship seems evident. Human being co-evolves with nature and the universe. Hence the question of values cannot be separated from science and technology and vice versa.

Gandhi had advocated values of techno-human relationship in terms of accessibility, affordability, de-centralization, generativity, democratization, alleviating poverty, dignified way of living/relating, experience of mystery-flow in work, etc. These hold true and even evidenced in our own time through IT revolution. We are invited to act contemplating the whole. NET seems to support this shift. There is 'a *mystic* and a *prophetic'* in technology that we have to un-conceal in response to the disclosure of the reality. The humans have to be responsible to technology; if not, technology becomes wayward.

The spinning wheel (*charka*) technology represented 'sacred music' of *karma yoga* and thus instanced an integral approach to living; NET and IT seem to confirm that such integral approach is the way forward. Such an integral approach leads to Home-coming. Enhancing true home-coming was also Gandhi's project.

Part - II

Accepting Our Individual Home

INDIVIDUALITY as Our Home

SATYAGRAHA TOWARDS AUTHENTIC INDIVIDUAL EXISTENCE
A Gandhian Perspective

Subhash Anand

Abstract: *The author seeks to present Gandhi as challenge to us today in our search for a deeper realization of our individuality. Gandhian satyagraha is not just a political strategy, but a comprehensive programme: the more we attain satya, the greater will be our authenticity. For this we need to tap the potential within: svadesha. Only that can guarantee our unique identity, enabling us to take charge of our lives: swaraj. To shape our lives in the right direction we need to listen to the voice of the inner guide: antaryamin. This will be possible when we create a suitable inner ambience: mauna; and discipline ourselves: the ashram vows.*

* * * * * * *

1. Introduction

Not many young people seem to be familiar with Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. He appears to be an ascetic, a mahatma,[1] far removed from their youthful world. They may even smile condescendingly at some of his experiments. Yet he may have something to offer them. Young people today cherish their freedom. This explains the growing generation gap between them and their elders. They are uncomfortable with the traditions of their community. This explains their creative

1 Certain words are now part of the English language. Others are very frequently used by Gandhi. These words will not be italicized, nor will they have any diacritical marks.

and at times crazy attitudes and actions. They think they know what is best for them. They resent being dictated to. They want to be free so that they can be what they think they should be. It is this longing for freedom that can bring the youth closer to Gandhi. For this they will need to understand him a little more. What is even more important, they will need to understand what freedom is all about.

In some ways the attitude and behaviour of our youth today is an expression of Postmodernism. Even though many in India may not have heard about Postmodernism, it is affecting all of us. Postmodernism

> is a story about stories, a belief about beliefs, and in time—probably a very short time—it will become a central part of the worldview of most people... It fills our daily lives with uncertainty and anxiety, renders us vulnerable to tyrants and cults, shakes religious faith, and divides societies into groups contending with one another in a strange and unfamiliar kind of ideological conflict—not merely conflict *between* beliefs, but conflict *about* belief itself.[2]

In postmodernism there is a shift from reason to intuition, from objective to subjective, from universal narrative to individual experience, from uniformity to difference, from common laws to personal decisions, and from institutional authority to personal responsibility. As a result we face even radical pluralism and relativism. Postmodernism questions the reality of foundational events and the normative character of overarching narratives.

> In the present cultural scenario of pluralism, liminality and mobility, common people out of socio-cultural compulsions construct a faith which does not make them belong to any religion per se... People are quite imaginative and intelligent in this regard and take profound freedom to interpret their faith in context. People increasingly say that they believe in 'spirituality' rather than 'religion.'[3]

This explains the emergence of what some term as the new age religions. On the other hand, this phenomenon generates a lot of

2 Donald Cozzens, *Sacred Silence*, (Collegeville (Minn): Liturgical Press, 2002), 86.

3 Anthony Kalliath, "Believing-Faith to Awakening-Faith: Asian Hermeneutics of Faith and Meaning of Conversion," *Third Millennium*, 18/1 1 (January – March, 2015), 40.

insecurity among peoples of all religions who have a very traditional mindset. They may react and this leads to violence. Or they may ignore what is happening and enclose themselves in a fundamentalist ghetto. I believe Gandhi's doctrine of *satyagraha* meets a very contemporary challenge. In some ways he was a Postmodern thinker. Only when we have authentic individuals will we be able in some way to ensure a just society and a healthy environment. In my reflection I am limiting myself to individual authenticity.

2. *Satyagraha*

When we speak of *satyagraha* many think that we are discussing a political tool. To appreciate fully the meaning of satyagraha, we need to understand the real meaning of *satya*, which is commonly translated as truth. The word *true* can have different meanings. There is, first, a true *definition*. A definition neither affirms nor denies the existence of the thing defined. Thus the truth of the definition belongs to the logical or metaphysical order. Here it is more a matter of correctness. Thus it is correct to say that a triangle has three sides. Next, we have true *knowledge*, i.e., we posses some awareness of reality as it is in itself. Even though this awareness is very much limited, it is nonetheless correct. There is at least a partial correspondence between the mind and the reality outside the mind. This is epistemological truth. Right now it is true that you are reading this text. What I say corresponds to what you are doing now, even though you may be dozing in between. Third, we speak of the truthfulness of a person's *communication*, verbal or otherwise. A person speaks the truth when he or she proclaims what he or she knows to be correct or, at least, believes it to be so. Hence he or she is worthy of trust. This is truth in the moral order, and indicates a harmony between one's awareness and one's communication. This, however, does not mean that what is given to us through the communication is correct. This is one reason why we constantly need to examine and evaluate what we believe to be correct. You see my name appended to this article and you think it is written by me. The editor too thought that way. But one cannot rule out the possibility that there was some mix up.

There is still a more profound understanding of truth, namely, ontological truth. Here we have the correspondence between the idea we have of something and the thing as it is. It is in this sense that we say "This is *true* gold!" or "He is a *true* gentleman!" The gold referred to is pure gold, not adulterated. The man spoken of really has the qualities which a gentleman ought to have. This is the truth of existence (*sat*). Closely connected with this is what I like to call religious or existential truth. Such is the case when life embraces belief, when one *does the truth*, when one lives the truth, when one is struggling to be what one really ought to be: genuine, authentic.

The concept of *satya*, while not excluding the first three understandings of the word *true*, is very much ontological and existential in its content. This becomes clear when we examine the origin of the word *satya*. It is derived from the root *as* (to be).[4] A thing or a person is *satya* when that thing or person "is truly and completely that which the substantive (to which it belongs) expresses."[5] It is what it is expected to be. Thus *satya* is essentially a mode of being and, only dependently, a characteristic of a concept or a doctrine, of knowledge, of communication. This is also the reason given by Gandhi for saying that God is truth.[6] *Satyagraha*, then, is the lifelong struggle to be what one ought to be. How do people know what they ought to be?

3. *Swadesha*: The Inner Potential

In his struggle for India's independence, Gandhi gave great importance to *swadeshi*. For many this denotes the use of things, especially cloth, produced in India. For Gandhi, however, this is another way of explaining the unity of human life and the inter-connectedness of all creation. "I would like to apply it [*swadeshi*] in our religious, political and economic life."[7] *Swadeshi* calls us to bring about harmony in the

4 "*sate hitam yat*." Vaman S. Apte, *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, rev. ed., 1912, rep. 1998), 952b.

5 Jan Gonda, "The Historical Background of the Name Satya Assigned to the Highest Being," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 48-49 (1968), 86.

6 Mohandas K. Gandhi, *In Search of the Supreme*, vol. 1, ed., V.B. Kher (Ahmadabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1961), 12, 38.

7 *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 90 Vols. (New Delhi: Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1958-84), vol. 13, 251.

whole universe, "*Swadeshi* then means the creation of a most perfect organization in which every part works in perfect harmony with every other."[8] This will be possible if we look at the whole of creation as our home. It is an invitation to go beyond narrow boundaries.

Initially *swadeshi* invites us to take our immediate neighbourhood seriously, to believe that we have within ourselves and within our God-given surroundings the resources we need for development:

> *Swadeshi* carries a greater and profound meaning. It does not mean merely the use of what is produced in one's own country. That meaning is certainly there in swadeshi. But there is another meaning implied in it which is far greater and much more important. Swadeshi means reliance on our own strength. We should also know what we mean by 'reliance on our own strength.' 'Our strength' means the strength of our body, our mind and our soul.[9]

While most of us think that this earth is our home, it is only a temporary shelter; we are all pilgrims. Hence "in its ultimate and spiritual sense swadeshi stands for the final emancipation of the human soul from its earthly bondage... [which] stands in the way of its realizing its oneness with other lives. A votary of swadeshi seeks to be emancipated from the bondage of the physical body."[10] Only in death do we reach our home, our *swadesh*. This, however, is not a dream for the future. The future is part of our present. God is part of my life. In him I have to exist, live and act. God is my Home. Being a *swadeshi* means being at home with and in Home.

In terms of personal authentic existence I take *swadesha* to mean that the direction we need to follow to become fully ourselves, and the resources we need to do that, both primarily come from within. Development reaches its height only when we actualize all our potential. "Human development is about much more than the rise or fall of national incomes. It is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative

8 *Ibid*., vol. 17, 331.

9 *The Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, ed., Raghavan Iyer (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993, 11th rep., 2004), 362.

10 *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 46, 254.

lives in accordance with their needs and interests."[11] The future of a living organism, its 'blue print,' is given to it from the first moment of its existence. The mightiest tree comes from a little seed that contained that tree even before the seed sprouted. Each one of us, by virtue of being a human person, has a 'blue print' buried deep within us. It is more intimate to us than our DNA. It precedes our birth. The Servant of Yahweh tells us: "The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name" (Is 49.1; 44.2). Jeremiah is given the assurance: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations" (Jer 1.5). Paul tells us: God "set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace" (Gal 1.15). What happened to the Servant of Yahweh, Jeremiah and Paul, happens to each one of us. God *knows* each one of us even before we were formed in the womb of our mother. From the very first moment of our being he *shapes* us (Ps 22.9-10; 71.6; 139.13).

Every human has a particular name, a unique destiny. This is not the result of the circumstances of life. It is God's choice for us. The Master Artist does not make copies. Every human is addressed by God at the moment of his conception. Our subsequent response to ourselves, others and the Others—the Triune God—is rooted in and routed by that call. Our personal *satyagraha* must be a struggle to answer that call: to become the unique person God has created us to be. When we wish to put up a building we approach a competent architect who then gives us a detailed blueprint. That is an event of the past in relation to the building that is still in the future (Ex 26.30). When God calls us he does not give us a blueprint but assures us his presence (33.14), an ever present mystery that is also constitutive of our future. Through deep prayer we enter that presence. The star that guides us to the Lord does not shine high up in the sky. It twinkles deep down within our hearts. When we are really seeking for the Lord it will be visible, and then even a devil like Herod the Great may provide us the guidance we need (Mt 2.1-9).

11 Victor L. Anthuvan, *The Dynamics and the Impact of Globalisation: A Subaltern Perspective* (Madurai: Amirtham Publ., 2006), 285.

Today discernment has become more difficult, surrounded as we are by a society that promotes consumer glamour, aggressive self-affirmation and hedonistic living. The mobile in its latest version and the internet possibilities this opens to us makes us more and more vulnerable. The longer we sit before the TV (*dūra-darśana*) the more our vision gets distorted (*dur-darśana*). We are then carried away by what the consumer market has to offer. We think we are great because we have enough money to buy the latest. We give more importance to what we have than to what we are. Almost all of what we have comes from outside. The greater part of what I am comes from within. Others may motivate me, but I have to freely accept the guidance I get and personalize it. We need inner discipline. "Those who are not attached to pleasure and personal adornment, I venture to say, can give a great impetus to *swadeshi*."[12]

4. *Swaraj*: Self-Direction as Personal Maturity

We think we are free. That is one of the biggest illusions of our times, especially of the youth. We are conditioned by our past. We need to become free. It is for this reason that the Hindu tradition speaks of *mōkṣa*, freedom not merely in the distant future, but here and now. The more free we become, the more we can really love, for love is not a matter of some feeling or instinct. Love is the gift one person makes to another in freedom. Were there no freedom, there would be no love. Love and freedom are two sides of the same coin. Freedom makes love possible. Love makes freedom meaningful.

We begin to lose our freedom even before we are born. We are sensitive to our mother's emotional life when she is carrying us, particularly whether she accepts us or not. Compared to other members of the animal kingdom, the newly born human is the least programmed. The human child is very vulnerable, and she can survive only by being accepted by her parents. Sometimes this acceptance is conditional. Slowly the child begins to read the message we convey through our facial expressions, the gestures we make, and eventually through words. The child somehow senses whether our acceptance is

12 *The Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, 364.

conditional or whether she is really loved and cared for. The more a child senses that she is being conditionally accepted, then guided by her survival instinct, she begins to play games: doing what brings her the greatest acceptance.

We need to survive not only in our homes, but also in all the other religious and social worlds we are obliged to inhabit. Sometimes the only comfortable way of doing that would be by playing games, and putting on masks. The more this happens to us, the more we lose our freedom. We are not really ourselves, but people who have put on a mask to make ourselves acceptable. In the process we bury our talents, our potential. This continues to happen even when we think we are adults. The truly mature persons respond from within. They do not react impulsively to situations outside, taking them at their face value. They have the courage to be honest and to hold on to the truth.

5. *Antaryamin*: The Inner Voice

If we wish to be the individual we ought to be, and be able to respond in a mature way to the different situations of life, we need to listen to our heart and understand its longings. This is not easy. Our heart is treasure-house that contains the guidance and the courage we need. But due to the many different interactions we go through life our heart gets covered with layers and layers of expectations and prohibition of people around us. It is also covered with the many scars that the wounds of life have left on us. We prefer to play safe. Slowly as we get in touch with our hearts we become aware that we can go deeper. It is like digging a well. The water that we find first is very dirty and unhealthy. We need to dig deeper. After some time we come across good water, but that does not last us through the summer. Then we go still deep and come to a spring the gives us water all through the year, year after year. Thus we come to what Gandhi calls the inner voice. "Before one is able to listen to that voice, one has to go through a long and fairly severe course of training, and when it is the inner voice that speaks, it is unmistakable."[13] Gandhi himself is aware of the possible abuse of this need to depend on the inner voice: everybody can claim

13 *In Search of the Supreme*, vol. 1, 260.

to be right because her or his conscience says so. Hence he insists that "conscience is the ripe fruit of the strictest discipline."[14]

We need to keep in mind that Gandhi was not trained in speculative philosophy. For him "the Voice of God, of Conscience, of Truth or the Inner Voice or 'the still small voice' mean one and the same thing."[15] Most of us belong to some religious community. We have our scriptures and traditions. Our elders appeal to their authority. But Gandhi begs to differ. "I would reject all scriptural authority if it is in conflict with sober reason or the dictates of the heart. Authority sustains and ennobles the weak when it is the handiwork of reason, but it degrades them when it supplants reason sanctified by the still small voice within."[16]

The market ethos has effectively infiltrated our lives. It controls our thoughts and decisions. This is also the dulling impact the media has on many of us. We stop thinking for ourselves. Unless we are critical, we may identify ourselves with one of the characters we see in our favourite serial, and live in a world of our fantasy, not merely while viewing T.V. programmes, but also at other times. As a result "*homo sapiens* is reduced to *animal imitans*, to an aping animal."[17] As a result, today, more than ever before, the path to authenticity has become very narrow, so narrow that sometimes no two persons can walk side by side. Very often we have to walk alone, but with the awareness that we are not alone. The Inner Voice accompanies and guides us in our discernment. If we are sincere then a deep inner voice will whisper to us: "You are on the right track, move neither to your left nor right, but keep to the straight and narrow way."[18] I believe that our inner wisdom can sometimes give us a deeper understanding of human growth and development than formal studies can do. This discernment has a depth dimension that responds effectively to one

14 Ibid., 262.
15 Ibid., 311.
16 Ibid., 112.
17 Raimon Panikkar, "A New Society for a New Millennium," in *Pilgrims in Dialogue: A New Configuration of Religions for Millennium Community*, ed., Antony Kalliath (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2000), 18.
18 *The Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, 93.

challenge of postmodernism. Postmodernism gives great importance to personal experience as an important guide in different areas of life: art, morality and religion. It also emphasizes difference as a sign of the creative potential of individuals and communities. People have the right to be different. There is no one way of celebrating life with all its phases and dimensions. Pluralism is the best safeguard for human authenticity.

6. *Mauna*: The Inner Ambience

Gandhi learnt the wisdom of listening to the inner voice while he was still in South Africa.

> It has often occurred to me that a seeker after truth has to be silent. I know the wonderful efficacy of silence… I visited a Trappist monastery in South Africa. A beautiful place it was. Most of the inmates of that place were under a vow of silence. I enquired of the Father the motive of it and he said that the motive was apparent. "We are frail human beings. We do not know very often what we say. If we want to listen to the still small voice that is always speaking within us, it will not be heard if we continually speak." I understood that precious lesson. I know the secret of silence.[19]

If my assessment is correct, then the visit to that Trappist monastery was a defining moment in Gandhi's life. Yet he does not mention it in his autobiography!

Real discernment is possible only when there is inner freedom. For this we need to become aware of the subconscious blocks that force us to play games and put on masks. We have to own them and slowly work towards greater freedom. This is what Asian sages mean when they speak about self-knowledge that leads to freedom. In a certain sense, the contemplation of God and self-knowledge demand an inward journey, a journey with oneself, within oneself, because God is not out there. He is the ground of our being, the breath that keeps us alive, the path that walks with us, and the awareness that makes us aware. To find him and ourselves we need to enter the cave of our heart.

19 *In Search of the Supreme*, vol. 3, 328.

Only those who can listen to and understand their own heart will be able to listen to and understand the hearts of others. Only they can really discern the true Inner Voice. "The 'Inner Voice' may mean a message from God or from the Devil, for both are wrestling in the human heart. Acts determine the nature of the voice."[20] The devil of whom Gandhi speaks is not out there. Deep down we carry a long history of hurts and frustrations, not to mention our natural inclinations. Only through silence we can see how the scars they have left are still shaping our life; the pressuring they are exerting on us. We need to discern the spirits. Only then will we have "truth, love and chastity in thought, word and deed."[21]

7. Ashram Vows: Authenticity as Interdependence

In 1904 Gandhi read J. Ruskin's *Unto the Last*, a book "that brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation" in his life.[22] As a result the ashram, "a community of men of religion,"[23] will eventually become an important element of Gandhi's thinking and living. When in 1915, he founded another ashram close to Ahmadabad, he named it `Satyagraha Ashram,' "as conveying both our goal and our method."[24] If we believe that "man is both an individual and social being,"[25] then we can understand why *satyagraha*, as a way of life, calls for a dialogue at the existential level: a community of seekers, a community in which there is a struggle to relate life and thought, praxis and theory.

Gandhi insisted that the members of the ashram must observe the five vows: *satya*, *brahmacarya*, *asteya*, *aparigraha* and *ahimsa*.[26] The joyful practice of these five vows is the sign that the inner voice speaking to us is really the voice of God. It is also a journey towards

20 Ibid., vol.1, 257.
21 Ibid., 63.
22 Mohandas K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography*: *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Ahmadabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 14th rep), 250.
23 Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Ashram Observances in Action*, tr. V.G. Desai (Ahmadabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 2nd imp., 1959), 3.
24 Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, 330.
25 Gandhi, *In Search of the Supreme*, vol. I, 201.
26 Gandhi, *Ashram Observances in Action*, 57.

greater wholeness. If *satyagraha* is the struggle to realize authentic existence, then there cannot be a dichotomy between my being and the expression of my being. Through my words and actions I express myself. If I am not truthful in thought, word and deed, then I cannot be truthful in being. Being by its nature is unlimited. *Brahmacarya* is the invitation to be pilgrims unto Transcendence; to walk towards Brahman.[27] We are constantly challenged to cross boundaries and jump over walls that we put up to protect ourselves. As the *Atharva-veda* informs us, we remain moving till we reach death ("*mṛtyor aham brahmacārī,*" 6.133.3).

In explaining the relation between *satya* and *ahimsa*, Gandhi fell back on the concept of *advaita* (non-dualism). In a very real sense a true community is an experience of *advaita*: people who are different in many ways come together in love, so that they experience one mind and one heart. They are many and yet one. This existential *advaita* is grounded precisely on the fundamental metaphysical insight of Gandhi: God, the supreme *Satya*, "alone is and nothing else exists (independently of Him)."[28] Just as we participate in the being of God, so too in a community we participate in the life of one another, sharing not just our ideas, but our all, united by love in our search for Love. Through this participation we slowly begin to feel for and with others. We grow in compassion: we avoid causing them pain. We become non-violent, not only in word and deed, but also in thought. Compassion for others makes us not to keep for ourselves what we do not really need—*asteya*, because "whoever appropriates more than the minimum that is really necessary for him is guilty of theft [*steya*]."[29] As sharing in the one undivided mystery of Being (*advaita*)

27 The words *brahmacarya* and *brahmacrin* are formed by combining *brahman* with a substantival form of the root *car*, "to walk." The word *brahman* is derived from the root *bhṛ* (to make or become big), and so we should not be surprised that the substantive is used both in Vedic and Classical Sanskrit, with many different meanings (Suryakanta, *A Practical Vedic Dictionary* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981), 493; Vaman S. Apte, *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, rev. ed., 1912, rep. 1998), 705), both in the masculine (*brahmā*) and in the neuter (*brahma*).

28 Gandhi, *In Search of the Supreme*, vol. I, 11.

29 Gandhi, *Ashram Observances in Action*, 58.

we are aware we cannot have full possession (*parigraha*) of anything. We are only stewards of God's blessings.

Thus the practice of the five vows will help us to be really free, and thus move towards individual authenticity, being what we can and ought to be. Then we will become effective partners in the struggle to create a just society and promote a healthy environment. Only in such a salubrious milieu can humans be fully human. Only then will humans be at home with themselves.

THE INNER POWER OF PRAYER
The Guiding Force of Gandhi's Freedom Movement

Loyola Amalraj[1]

Abstract: *Many individuals walk the face of the earth but only some leave behind indelible marks. Images of such are etched in human hearts. Gandhi is one of the world's greatest legends. By birth he was Indian but his ideals and legacy have been embraced by the whole world. His life and legacy have been and are ideals for many great leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela who revolutionized freedom movements following in the footsteps of Gandhi, particularly in following the path of Ahimsa or non-violence. How to oppose an aggressor's oppression without necessarily hating the aggressor is what Gandhi experimented with and revealed to the world. His was a remarkable journey that started with the discovery of power within his inner self. The inspiration for his self discovery was propelled by his honest search for Truth. Devotion to God through prayerful life and truthful speaking, thinking, and acting had been the hallmark of that search. All his political and social actions flowed from a deep transformation at the conscious, unconscious, and spiritual levels of being. He indeed was Mahatma or great or highly transformed soul.*

* * * * * * *

1 I would like to acknowledge my gratitude to my beloved former Professor Dr. Pushparajan for his significant contributions to the spiritual aspects of Gandhi's life and mission. The articles referenced to in this brief study contain scholarly depth into the mystical dimensions of the personality make-up of Gandhi. Dr. Pushparajan's writings demonstrate how pivotal the spiritual aspects of Gandhi's life were in the freedom movement.

In this article an attempt is made to understand how Gandhi developed a personal inner journey which was an honest examination of his very life. It was a life primarily devoted to seeking Truth that many religions call Absolute or God. Secondarily, he drew his strength for political, civil and social actions of liberation from his inner resources. For Gandhi guidance by the inner wisdom was uncompromising and at times a friendless path. This article will briefly describe the importance of prayer as evidence of his desperate personal need for God. He was ordinary like most of us. Raising himself from the pits of failures he moved to extraordinariness in ordinary ways. Next, how his fundamental yearning for Truth, his desperate need for prayer, and his universal understanding of God became part of his freedom movement will be examined. Following that will be an analysis of Gandhi's development of communal prayers and their components and how he used them as the means for unity among masses. Then the object of Gandhi's prayer and his personal sense of prayer and God will be illustrated. The final section will compare Gandhi's prayers to the prayers of the mystics underscoring the psychology of prayer guiding one to three levels of being. Thus we shall try to understand how Gandhi was a truly 'transformed soul' who delved into politics to fight for the freedom of the masses without necessarily desiring to be a politician and how he remained poor, humble, and simple completely detached from political ambitions.

1. Importance of Prayer

Any recollection of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi brings to memory his humility and simplicity of life. Toward the latter phase of his life, his demeanor was calm and recollected. Serenity and tranquility that enveloped him were not something he put on as a politician to attract the masses. He radiated a genuine transformation within and without. Evidence suggests his political and social actions flowed from a prayerful life. What he gifted to India was not merely a political freedom but also an example for inner liberation from the ego self. The humble self that he developed confronted the aggressor, the then global British Empire, without hatred. He judged the actions of the oppressor while respecting his dignity as a child of God. He desired

to do good for the enemy and convert him in the process.[2] The way he attempted to accomplish this was through *ahimsa* or non-violence. His path was untraveled in the sense he gained that wisdom through listening to his inner voice. His experiment with and search for Truth empowered him to stand alone in his journey and impart a tremendous wisdom. This quest started in prayer and continued to envelope his journey progressing in depth and insight for his freedom movement.

Every act of Gandhi was done out of prayer. He said, "No act of mine was done without prayer." He had also stated, "Prayer has been the saving of my life. Without it I would have been a lunatic long ago."[3] His bitter experiences threw him into turmoil and despair but only temporarily. He was able to steady and reclaim calm through prayer. "In spite of despair staring on me in the face on the political horizon, I had never lost my peace. In fact, I have found people who envied my peace. That peace, I tell you, comes from prayer. I am not a man of learning but I honestly claim to be a man of prayer."[4]

His life of prayer was not something he had developed to achieve calm for himself but he had employed it as a means to bring harmony and freedom to society. He had not only learned to fight the aggressor without hatred through prayer but enabled the masses to achieve liberation from the oppressor peacefully. The last phase of his life marked many 'pilgrimages of peace' to places such as Noakhali, Calcutta, and Delhi. He had congregational prayers as an integral part of his non-violent movement. The very idea of bringing people to congregational prayers was born out of a need at the start of *Satyagraha* or 'adherence to Truth,' a liberation movement he started in South Africa.[5] Erikson translates it as "soul force."[6] Let us briefly examine his life as a young man and his work in South Africa where

2 A. Pushparajan, "The image of the liberated Person: A Gandhian Perspective," *Vaiharai* (*The Dawn*): *A Theological Quarterly,* Vol. 2, No. 4, (October 1997), 235.

3 M. K. Gandhi, as cited in A. Pushparajan, "Prayer Meetings with Gandhi," *Gandhi Marg* 111 (Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, Vol. 10, No. 3, June 1988), 156.

4 Ibid.

5 A. Pushparajan , *op. cit.,* 1997, 230-34.

6 As cited in D. M. Wulff, *Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997), 389.

he first started the liberation movement in which prayer meetings became an integral part.

1.1. Desperate Desire for Prayer

Gandhi's devotion to prayer may lead one to assume that he perhaps had been a prayerful person since childhood. But there is no support to suggest that he was so. A brief review of his early childhood and adulthood reveals that he was very much like any one of us. He had all the shortcomings of human nature. He is called "*Mahatma*" which means a great soul. But there is every reason to believe the contrary is true. He was just another '*saadatma*,' an ordinary soul.[7] Critics have pointed out his weaknesses, as Gandhi himself admitted in his autobiography. His sincere admission of vulnerabilities makes him even more admirable because he actually started to grow more when he became honest about himself. Gandhi followed the inner voice of his conscience as he had devout parents who nurtured in him a healthy image of God. As a boy he understood the values of self-control, self-discipline, prayer, and the voice of the Spirit in conscience. In his autobiography entitled, translated, and published as *An Autobiography*: *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Gandhi comments about later growth: "I count no sacrifice too great for the sake of seeing God face to face: What I want to achieve, and what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain *Moksha.*"[8]

This statement at the later phase of his life demonstrates how this was deeply embedded in his conscience in his lifelong search and longing for God. But he had a humble and ordinary beginning common to many.

1.2. Less Prayerful, Ordinary Life

A profile of Gandhi as a young man seems to be contrary to his later realization of the divine presence. As a boy, he was physically so weak and feeble that he did not play cricket or football like many of

7 A. Pushparajan, *op. cit.,* 1998, 37-43.

8 M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Ahmadabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1927), cf., "Introduction."

his age. His intellectual acumen was that of a mediocre student. He struggled to keep up with his homework, did not have linguistic skills, and mostly limited his reading to his text books. Emotionally, he had a fear of snakes, thieves, and evil spirits and was afraid of the dark. Psychologically, he suffered fear of the stage and public audiences. He was obsessed with attention to details. He became infatuated with his dance teacher. Morally, he was weak and vulnerable. Even as a boy he started smoking. He stole money from his servants and even a golden pen from his brother to buy cigarettes. But then in confessing his wrong doing to his father he was graciously forgiven and accepted. He told lies to his mother and was easily upset and short tempered with his wife and even visited brothels. Driven by despair and a sense of failure, he had even attempted suicide. Professionally, he had a hard time arguing his first case. He nearly froze when he first cross examined the plaintiff on behalf of the defendant. He could not proceed with further arguments. Personally, after high school he could not keep up with his college studies. To escape college he made a choice to pursue studies as a barrister. With the failure of his first case in a court in Bombay he returned to Rajkot and never returned to his legal career.[9] All these weaknesses only pushed him to seek God for support and strength.

1.3. Commitment to Truthfulness

Gandhi believed in the Absolute Truth, the Ultimate Reality. It is that which is the Perfect Being, Total Consistency that cannot be comprehended. That Truth is beyond the human mind's ability to analyze. The way he arrived at this belief is through personal reflection of human conditions. When we say someone is 'truthful' we commonly think it means that person is truth-telling. For Gandhi it is an incomplete understanding. Speaking the truth must flow from an attitude of 'thinking truly.' This is where Gandhi derives the idea of being nonjudgmental. Our judgment of others is often partial and rushed. Not all the factors are taken into consideration before arriving at a conclusion. Gandhi dared to believe that God dwells in the enemy as much as he does in ourselves; it was a conviction of his. He would

9 A. Pushparajan, *op. cit.,* 1997, 41-42.

want that to be considered when opposing an aggressor. Without that dimension the perception of an enemy judged from his immoral behavior alone would be considered untruthful thinking.

There is still another piece to truthfulness. A person should not only be truth-speaking and truth-thinking but equally one's actions should be truthful. One cannot retreat from committing oneself to what one thinks and speaks about truly. For Gandhi truth means a perfect consistency of thought, word, and deed. As humans we all fall short of that perfection. It is that Supreme Being who has the most perfect consistency that many call God. Gandhi used the term Absolute Truth for God.[10] This Truth could not be fully defined or described by human intelligence, nor can this Absolute Truth be analyzed by human minds. Gandhi claimed the Truth could only be believed in and searched for through a truthful thinking, speaking, and acting. Only a prayerful worship and union with God would empower one in this arduous journey.

1.4. Universal Understanding of God

Gandhi searched for an understanding of God from the perspectives of Christianity, Islam, Jainism, and especially Hinduism. In that process he was able to comprehend the fundamental unity of all religions. While living in Africa he made friends with good Christians. He read and learned about Christianity. He was particularly awed by Leo Tolstoy's book *The Kingdom of God within You* and John Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. Tolstoy's spiritual interpretation of Christianity, particularly about the presence of 'the Kingdom within' for Gandhi was similar to Vedantic understanding of the idea of a human person bearing God: *Tat tvam asi*: *thou art Thou.*[11] Gandhi found the first *Sura* or verse of the Koran, the holy book of Islam, is called *fatiha*, which offers praise to God parallel to the common Christian prayer call the 'Our Father.' Verses from the Koran were part of congregational

10 A. Pushparajan, "Mahatma Gandhi's Gospel of Truth Enabling Religious Dialogue," in *Discipleship and Dialogue*: *New Frontiers in Interfaith Engagement*, ed., E. Lott, M. M. Thangaraj & A. Wingate (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2013), 268.

11 A. Pushparajan, *op. cit.,* 1997, 251; Amalraj L., *Imagery's Place in Physical, Psychological, and Spiritual Healing*: *Perspectives from Religious and Mystical Traditions* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2002), 303.

prayers he had introduced to the community he had established in South Africa. Gandhi also added Buddhist *mantra* or repetitive prayer in Japanese to his morning prayer: "I bow to you the Buddha the giver of true religion."[12] Parsi prayers were attractive to him and he added them to his prayer regimen. He was enamored by the "Sermon on the Mount" found in the New Testament of the Bible. Jesus' call to "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Mt, 5:44) is called a beatitude or blessedness in the Sermon on the Mount. Gandhi found the idea of conquering evil by good, hatred by love, similar to the Buddhist and Jaina teachings of *Ahimsa* or non-injury. His fundamental idea of facing the enemy non-violently is the core of his doctrine in the freedom movement. From this moral belief flowed political and social actions.

2. Development of Congregational Prayers

Based on his understanding of the fundamental unity of all religions, Gandhi began to introduce prayer as the integral part of his mission. Gandhi happened to go to South Africa on a one year contract with regard to a civil law suit on behalf of an Indian merchant. There he happened to witness prejudices and biases suffered by the Indian immigrants. They were ill-treated and oppressed by the White minority. Events he witnessed shocked Gandhi. The discrimination by the South African Whites dehumanized the colored people. There was a life altering moment when he himself became a victim of discrimination. Gandhi was scheduled to travel by train to his place of work. His client had booked him a ticket in first class. In the middle of his journey, an English man boarded the same compartment. So Gandhi was asked by the conductor to vacate it and move to an ordinary compartment because he happened to be a colored person. But when Gandhi refused stating that he had the right to travel in the same compartment because he had the ticket, the conductor pushed him out and threw his belongings on the platform of Maritzburg Railway station late at night. Shocked by the blatant injustice and discrimination he went to the waiting room in the freezing cold without even bothering to collect his luggage lying on the platform.

12 A. Pushparajan, *op.cit.,* 1988, 164.

This incident deeply affected him. Following that he did some soul searching and became determined to oppose the structure of the British Imperial system that perpetuated discrimination against colored people in the form of apartheid policies. He plunged himself into politics abandoning his legal career and sacrificing his material well-being for the sake of the immigrant Indians.[13]

He started a political movement called *Satyagraha* or adherence to Truth movement. Gandhi initially called the movement 'passive resistance,' meaning readiness to die rather than subjecting to an evil system. But he elevated the movement to something more positive and challenging. He desired it to be taken as commitment or adherence to Truth. By that he meant doing good to the evil doer in an effort to change the oppressor's heart. There is no room for "untruth, selfish ends or gains."[14] His freedom movement was spiritual and social, meant to change the hearts of the exploiter as well as the exploited. Gandhi began to realize that spiritual formation developed through personal and communal prayer practices was foundational to effect social and political changes. Erikson translates *Satyagraha* in psychological terms as passive resistance, a "means to confront the enemy *within oneself* nonviolently."[15] It also fits well with Gandhi's intended holistic goal for freedom within and without. Prayer is a necessary catalyst. His movement attempted to bring about a multifaceted solution. Gandhi moved his family from India to South Africa where he spent nearly twenty one years to dedicate his life fully to this movement although he had originally planned to be there only one year.[16]

2.1. Prayer Meetings

Gandhi realized that the Indian immigrants in South Africa could not fight the superior military might of the Whites. He desired to tap into what he called 'soul force' as a potent weapon to fight the racial injustices and discrimination leveled against the Indian minority.

13 A. Pushparajan, *op.cit.,* 1997, 231.
14 Ibid., 238.
15 D. M. Wulff, *op. cit.,* 1991, 389.
16 A. Pushparajan, *op.cit.,* 1997, 231.

He created a community of workers near Phoenix in South Africa on a farm. There Gandhi started a press and published a weekly paper called *Indian Opinion* while living among his co-workers. All workers lived on the farm working and earning the same wage and working for the press in their spare time. Most of the workers were Hindus but there were a few Christians, Muslims, and Parsis. This is where Gandhi started evening prayer meetings, mostly singing hymns from various religions. There was a common kitchen but people also had their own private kitchens. He felt the need for an *Ashram* or dwelling place where *Satyagrahi* families could live together in a common and religious life. When the struggle in South Africa ended successfully the settlers from Phoenix moved to India. Gandhi decided to create similar entities he called 'Satyagraha Ashrams' in places like Kochrab near Ahmedabad, Sabarmathi, and Sevagram near Wardha. Communal life and common worships continued, respecting each person's religion. Gandhi committed his life to the quest for truth and he wanted the ashram-community to be his fellow travelers in his search.[17]

2.2. Prayer Methods

Congregational morning prayers were held from 4:15 to 4:45 a.m. and the evening prayers from 7:00 to 7:30 p.m. The worship was conducted under the canopy of the sky reflecting the simplicity of the starving millions and no common image was introduced. The method of Morning Prayer was prearranged and simple. First selected *ślōhas* or short verses were recited. Next a *bhajan* or hymn was sung. The last item was the *Githapath* or recitation of the Gita, the holy book of the Hindus. At the evening prayer, verses from the Gita were recited. Then *bhajan* or hymn and *Ramdhun* his favorite song were sung. Then a section from the sacred scripture Gita was read and a brief explanation was offered.[18]

2.2.1. Divine Attributes

Gandhi did not prefer the popular images of Hindu religion such as Saraswathi and Ganesh. He believed God is indescribable by mortals.

17 A. Pushparajan, *op. cit.,* 1988, 159-60.
18 Ibid., 162-63.

Any attempt to paint the image of God would be limited. Simple recitation in the heart he believed would enable one to adore God rather than the intellect dwelling on an image. He believed God was beyond any human intellectual understanding. Simply repeating God's attributes from the hungry heart humans could enter into a relationship with God and become aware of God's presence in the soul. He advocated simple recitation of sacred verses and divine attributes for an experience of God.[19] Amalraj's study reports that Sufis of Islam used phrases, "O Allah! O Allah! O Allah!" and the "99 names or attributes of God" such as "*Ar-Rhmaan*" or "the Beneficient" or "*Ar-Raheem*" or "the Merciful" repetitiously as a means of concentration "leading one to deeper insights and enlightenment."[20]

Gandhi arose from a devout family that was committed to prayerful religious devotions. As his family raised him in the practice of a particular prayer method called "the recitation of *Namajapa*."[21] *Namajapa* is a form of prayer in which the repetition of the Lord's name is performed in undertone. Such devotions enabled him to commune with God and listen to God's voice within.[22] In the Royal Yoga of Hinduism psychophysical exercises are performed as a means to concentration in meditation.[23] Repetition of the two letter word "*Om*" is believed to "create mesmerizing effects."[24] Repetitive *mantras* or sacred words and even internally generated sounds were used to facilitate concentration of mind.[25] The upbringing of Gandhi in prayerful devotions must have greatly influenced him in his personal experience of the efficacy of prayer practices. He knew how effective they would be when he introduced this practice in communal worship.

19 A. Pushparajan , *op. cit.,* 1988, 162.
20 L. Amalraj, *op. cit.,* 2002, 279.
21 M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, *or The Story of My Experiments with Truth,* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1927, reprint 1976), 23.
22 M. K. Gandhi, in *Prayer*, ed., C. Kaji, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1977), 107.
23 L. Amalraj, *op. cit.,* 2002, 279.
24 L. Amalraj, *op. cit.,* 2002, 71.
25 A. Mookerjee & M. Khanna, *The Tantric Way*: *Art, Science, Ritual* (Boston MA: New York Graphic Society, 1977), 149-50.

2.2.2. Singing

"Mass singing of *Ramdhun* and the beating of *tal* [or drum] according to Gandhi generate a power and an atmosphere of sweetness and fragrance which has only to be seen to be realized."[26] What we find here is the usage of sound engaging the sensation of hearing. Singing and the beating of drums are repetitive and they help the worshipper with concentration. Sound and repetition promote focused attention which enables the thinking mind to move beyond itself and enter into the realm of the spirit. This is something that cannot be intellectually explained but could be realized only through personal experience. That is what Gandhi means when he says, "to be seen [is] to be realized."[27] Clinical and medical studies support this. Amalraj's study indicates how "In one study, using a consistent stimulus such as an object, a sound, or a phrase that was repetitiously employed aloud [Dr.] Benson [a professor *of medicine at Harvard medical school*] demonstrated to the subjects how to relax by concentrating on the stimulus."[28]

2.2.3. Recitation

Recitation of verses from the Gita played a prominent role in worship. The arrangement was such that in fourteen days all the verses from the Gita were covered and everyone ought to have known what verses needed to be recited every day. This practice was to enable everyone to know the entire Gita by heart. The Gita was to be an authoritative guide to the belief and conduct of the Satyagraha Ashram. This was to provide them with correctness of life in terms of ideas and behaviors. This practice is common to Semitic religions. Recitation of verses from the Koran and the psalms for Jews and Christians was considerably a part of the prayer services. In Sufi tradition recitation of divine names was combined with saying the rosary. Rosaries with thirty-three or ninety-nine beads have been used for counting the repetition of the divine names as a method of concentration.[29] Christian tradition follows a similar devotional practice of reciting the

26 A. Pushparajan, *op. cit.,* 1988, 163.
27 Ibid.
28 L. Amalraj, *op. cit.,* 2002, 6.
29 A. Schimmel , *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 177.

rosary. This includes the repetition of the "Hail Mary" prayer for each bead and the well known "Our Father" prayer after each of the five decades. This devotion has been in existence for several centuries. Recitation of Jesus' prayer "Our Father" in the heart even without the usage of any sound, word, or movement of the tongue is said to bring about "an ineffable state that is far above all human feeling."[30]

Objections were raised to the mechanical recitation of the verses causing monotony and boredom. Gandhi responded saying, "it is not the content of recitation but the spirit behind the recitation which made prayer effective."[31] For Gandhi the necessary condition for prayer to be effective is that "the soul must be hungry for offering prayer and to be one with God."[32] It is the longing and the devotion with which these prayers are recited that will produce the impact on the one who prays. What may appear to be merely mechanical to some, for the devotee, depending on the level of his passion, repetition is effective. To the degree that one is devoted the prayer will impact the individual. "If the soul hungers after them, it will not quarrel with the monotony of the prayer but will derive nourishment from it."[33] Amalraj who studied the prayer methods of mystical traditions believes that monotony and boredom may be spurned and resisted by the intelligent human mind, creating even fear and anxiety, "but to the one who has learned the art of surrendering, every repetitious word or phrase sounds as if it were new."[34] The human mind "quiets down in response to very silly, monotonous repetition."[35]

2.3. Prayer Meetings as an Antidote to Religious Bigotry

In 1945 Gandhi was to tour many parts of India such as Bengal, Assam, and South India to calm various warring factions of Hindu and Muslim religions. The visits were meant to prepare the masses to accept the hoped for Independence and to live amicably as brothers

30 Cassian, as quoted in Clement O., *The Roots of Christian Mysticism* (New York: New City Press, 1995), 207.
31 A. Pushparajan, *op. cit.,* 1988, 163.
32 Ibid., 164.
33 A. Pushparajan, *op.cit.,* 1988, 163.
34 L. Amalraj, *op. cit.,* 2002, 42.
35 L. Amalraj , *op. cit.,* 2002, 33.

and sisters. He believed that unless the masses were trained in non-violent behaviors they would not bear the weight of Independence but only would rather crumble. He used prayer meetings as the means to train the masses in nonviolence. With the partition of India into India and Pakistan, Hindus and Muslims engaged in violence which spawned mass killings. When religious bigotry and fanaticism ran wild Gandhi introduced congregational prayers of large gatherings in big cities. Hindus and Muslims were invited to participate and pray together. Recitation of sacred scriptures from the Koran and the Gita, the holy books of Islam and Hinduism, were incorporated in the worship. He offered short speeches on the importance of prayer after worship services. "Prayer was to be more and more his way of action. He was going to present it to countless men and women as a panacea for fear and as a means to make the weak strong."[36]

2.4. The Object of Prayer

Gandhi believed that the intention of prayer was to commune with God. Prayer is not meant to please God who does not need our prayers. It purifies us so that we can consciously realize God's presence within us. Prayer was also the means to turn on the inner search lights so that with God's help we might overcome our weaknesses. He also believed in the collective transformative power of one pure person over the rest of the praying congregation. The efficacy of prayer is such that even enmity could be overcome because anyone imbued with the spirit of God could not continue to harbor hatred. Gandhi insisted on mass singing because it was the external expression of unity of all religions. With the beating of the *tal* or drum and external singing, thoughts become so attuned that they would "create an atmosphere of ineffable sweetness and strength which no words can describe."[37] The prayerful singing created a personal as well as collective experience of the presence of God, enabling individuals to experience calm and tranquility quite contrary to anger, hatred, and violence. The inner experience of prayer was to teach them to be open to something deeply transformative inside themselves and he hoped that would help the masses naturally let go of the animosity

36 A. Pushparajan, *op. cit.,* 1988, 167.
37 Ibid.

that was brutally divisive. Prayer meetings were not a substitute for communal involvement but rather were believed to be a necessary preliminary for social transformation. Prayer for him was "the most potent instrument of action":

Prayer is the greatest binding force, making the solidarity and oneness of the human family. If a person realizes his unity with God through prayer, he will look upon everybody as himself. There will be no high, no low, no narrow provincialisms or petty rivalries . . .[38]

The differences in terms of different languages and cultures must therefore cease because of this inner realization. There could not be any personal power or gain from any particular group over another. The outer existence for him should reflect the inner calm. A union with God in the heart he believed would certainly contribute to the external peace, harmony, and freedom from fear. Gandhi says, "Realization of God must mean freedom from all earthly fear."[39]

2.5. Gandhi's Personal Sense of Prayer

From the importance of communal prayer gatherings one can postulate about Gandhi's personal practice of prayer. Without that personal inner experience Gandhi could not have demanded from others what he did not demand from himself. It is that Gandhi wanted to share with the masses deep, personal inner experience. If the masses could realize a union with God they would be better citizens, recognizing God in each other. About his personal practice Gandhi says, "Speaking for myself, I can say that I can do, and have often done, without food for days on end, but I cannot do without prayers even for a single day."[40] This shows how prayer practice for Gandhi was as much personal as it was communal in his life.

Gandhi admits he did not ask God for anything when he prayed but simply kept repeating the sacred verses or hymns. He felt the presence of God in him all the time, even when he had been jailed. He claimed

38 A. T. Hingorani, *Food for the Soul* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhava, 1970), 171.
39 Ibid.
40 M. K. Gandhi, in *Prayer*, ed., C. Kaji (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1977), 104.

he never experienced desertion by God. In spite of despair and turmoil he claimed he never felt he had lost peace. The relationship between God and him was not limited to prayer times alone but extended to all times as if he was in a perpetual bondage as a slave to his master: "Prayer to me is the intense longing of the heart to merge myself in the Master. If a man does not pray, evidently he has no longing; there is no feeling of helplessness and there is no helplessness, there is no need for help."[41]

One could imagine how desperate he must have been when he started the movement of non-violence to free India from the British Empire which claimed that the sun never set on its kingdom around the world. Desperation drove him to seek God even more personally.

2.6. Gandhi's Personal Sense of God

Gandhi's sense of God is One who is beyond the grasp of human intelligence. For him one has to believe God exists. "If I exist God exists. With me it is a necessity of my being … "[42] It is a given fact. He recommends that we start with faith as a token of our humility and the admission that we know nothing about Him and that we are such small creatures, only a speck in the entire universe. Once we accept God and our role in His plan, prayer then becomes inevitable. He considers God infinite and ageless. Humans could describe God only in ineffective language. He defies our explanation. God is infinite and unlimited as the ocean. But that God is also immanent in humans:

> God is not some person outside ourselves or away from the universe. He pervades everything, and is omniscient as well as omnipotent. He does not need any praise or petitions. Being immanent in all beings, he hears everything and reads our innermost thoughts. He abides in our hearts and is nearer to us than the nails are to the fingers.[43]

This God whom we adore and search for and realize is nothing but Truth. Truth is God. God is Truth. This conception of God is unique and original and yet similar in traditional religions. Gandhi simplified

41 Ibid., 73.

42 C. Kaji, *op. cit*., 1997, 29.

43 M. K. Gandhi, *Ashram Observances in Action* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1955), 36.

it for his devotion to God. His simplistic teaching of God reportedly appealed to the illiterate and poor who were hungry for political freedom as well as for God.

> This truth is not merely the truth we are expected to speak. It is That which alone is, which constitutes the stuff of which all things are made, which subsists by virtue of its own power, which is not supported by anything else but supports everything that exists. Truth alone is eternal, everything else is momentary. It need not assume shape or form. It is pure intelligence as well as pure bliss . . Therefore [It] is not a blind law. It governs the entire universe. To propitiate this Truth is *prarthana* which in effect means an earnest desire to be filled with the spirit of Truth … herefore the prayers we offer for a short time in the hope that a time will come when all our conduct will be one continuously sustained in prayer.[44]

Gandhi believed that earnest longing for God would bring about a greater moral behavior. Constant communion with God through prayer would have a lasting effect on the one who prays.

Heiler divides the "prayer of the men of religious genius" into two categories: the *mystical* and the *prophetic*. The mystical kinds turn away from the world, its objects, the ego, and focus on the Infinite. But the prophetic ones are "firmly anchored in the social world, passionately affirming life and vigorously seeking to realize its ideals in the spheres of faith and moral action."[45] Gandhi certainly did not choose to isolate himself from society and enter a monastic life or seek to dwell in caves in search of enlightenment. He strongly felt called to commit himself to the enslaved, the illiterate, and the hungry masses of India who longed for political, social, economic, and structural freedom. Erickson called Gandhi a "*religious activist.*"[46] Gandhi was more a spiritual liberator than a religious activist. Gandhi led the masses to this freedom primarily through his personal spiritual transformation which is liberation of the self from the ego. He believed in a social freedom founded on the spiritual freedom. He could very well be called a "social mystic." As Heiler states not only was his prayer prophetic but Gandhi himself was a prophetic

44 Ibid., 37.

45 F. Heiler as cited in Wulff, *op. cit.,* 1991, 538.

46 D. M. Wulff, *op. cit.,* 1991, 395.

mystic, a highly transformed person who gradually realized the state of a supernatural being, enjoying purity of heart and mind in thought, word, and deed with which he led the masses to more than a political freedom. Indian psychology would call him a liberated soul or *Jeevan Mukta* who lived a life of poverty, simplicity, unselfishness, humility, universal love and detachment.[47] He immersed himself in politics without necessarily being drawn to its perks, privileges, ambitions and power. Because Gandhi's primary goal in life, "seeing God face to face," resulted in a union with God. No greater desires lured and trapped him.[48] It is no wonder that no other ambitions would have been greater or more compelling than a prayerful union with God.

3. Psychology of Mystical Prayer

The prayer methods Gandhi engaged in and taught to the communities that he established and congregational gatherings that he held typically included reciting of divine names, repetitive reading of the sacred verses, and repetition of *mantras* or repetitive prayers. Amalraj's study supports the view that these methods are reflective of the mystical prayer methods of many world traditions such as *shamanism*, royal yoga of Hinduism, Tibetan Buddhism, Kabbalah of Judaism, Christian mysticism, and Sufism of Islam. These traditions derive from mainstream religions acknowledgment of doctrines and theologies. But they reduced the relationship with the divine to simple methods such as repetition, visualization, breathing exercises, and some psychophysical exercises. These ways were either preliminary to or part of their contemplative prayer methods. "Mystics claim that neither intelligence nor senses can serve as a means to union with the Absolute."[49] By condensing the love of the Absolute to mere repetition of a word or phrase the mystics crossed the boundaries of rational mind and emoting body. The underlying principle was that it was a journey of the unknown toward the unknowable God. This was a core belief of Gandhi: God is beyond any human analysis. A relationship with him is simply through humble surrendering of the self.

47 A. Pushparajan, *op. cit.,* 1997.

48 M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, *or The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1927, reprint 1976).

49 Amalraj L., *op. cit.,* 2002, 318.

In his studies[50] Amalraj concludes that the journey of the mystics started in the conscious mind and moved to other levels of being or awareness: the unconscious and the spiritual unconscious. Consciousness is a primary level of being. Deepened by contemplative prayer practices mystics move from the conscious to the unconscious mind, a much deeper mind. In Freud's terms "consciousness is the thin slice of the total mind."[51] Whereas most proponents of psychology studied only these two realms of being, the conscious and the unconscious, only a minority of psychologists like Viktor Frankl postulated a third realm of being or awareness called "the spiritual unconscious" or "superconscious."[52] Frankl's spiritual unconscious is the counterpart of the instinctual unconscious of Freud.[53] The negative unconscious depository consists of suppressed materials such as anger, anxiety, and depression while the positive spiritual unconscious is the dwelling place of peace, love, joy, and forgiveness. It is the state of unconditional love which is what mystics encountered through constant prayer practices.[54] It is where the human soul or spirit merges with the Absolute, the Eternal Self or, in Gandhi's words, Truth. The communion is inexplicable, indescribable, and defies understanding or expression. But the transformation of the soul literally affects the being of the mystics. Gandhi radiated that union with God in his words and deeds.

In conclusion it can be stated that the Gandhian principle of *ahimsa* or non-injury of the enemy is not something that intelligent people will accept as a viable alternative to resolve problems. Even today in the moral theology of Christianity 'just wars' are accommodated. We fight and destroy the enemy because we have a right to defend our life from an unjust aggressor. But Gandhi showed that there was

50 Amalraj L., *op. cit.,* 2002, 320; *How to Experience the Spiritual Meaning of Gospel Texts*: *The Psychology of Reading Mystically* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), 34-37.

51 G. Corey, *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy* (4th. ed.), (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1975), 98.

52 R. Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis*: *A Collection of Basic Writings* (New York: Penguin Arkana, 1965), 168; V. Frankl, *The Unconscious God*: *Psychotherapy and Theology* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1975), 25.

53 L. Amalraj, *op. cit.,* 2010, 36.

54 Ibid.

another way. His life and actions are embodied in the following words of Jesus:

> But to you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic (Lk: 6, 27-29).

Gandhi's life epitomized these words without necessarily realizing he had been totally transformed by imitating the words of Christ. This reflects the transformation Jesus underwent in the garden of Gethsemane. When he began his passion he underwent the ultimate test of his own words and gave witness to what he had taught. That was also the start of his resurrection, unconditionally forgiving love. Jesus showed an indestructible eternal love that could not be destroyed by the brutality of human evils. Gandhi epitomized that. He will be a *Mahatma* or great soul in human history, even though his road may remain untraveled by many. To fight the aggressor's injustices without hating him would require extraordinary reliance on the inner power that evolves in one gradually through a prayerful union with God. The voice within was subtle, rationally un-understandable, and inexplicable but Gandhi pursued it disregarding the costs it involved. It may be something we could understand but the human mind will have a problem agreeing with and actualizing it. Since it is contrary to human nature, we ought to learn to rely on a source within and beyond ourselves. This incomprehensible source will enable us to live up to these ideals which we cannot reach through our own will power. Gandhi tapped into the inner resources by a prayerful union with God. What guided and directed him was that inner wisdom. It led him to a holistic freedom of body, mind, and spirit. He tried to impart it to the masses. His legacy will remain unparalleled.

The very heart of Gandhi's political and social movement hinges on a spiritual foundation. The articles referenced to in this study evidence how Gandhi focused on the 'soul power' in order to effect a social-political liberation. It could be stated that Gandhi is more a spiritual rather than a political leader although he is both. Gandhi emanated a deeply spiritual aura that propelled a national movement among the

masses of India. His liberation movement challenged, fought with nonviolence, and humbled the mighty British Empire which had all the means and power to crush the movement. But because he resisted the oppressor with weapons of nonviolence and noncooperation, he led India to a holistic liberation which was social, political, economical, and spiritual in nature. Gandhi's spirituality is a testament to the potential of human transformation.

RTA OF OUR INNER AND OUTER COSMIC HOME

R. Nathan, csc

Abstract: *This article makes an attempt to capture the meaning of cosmos as home. Our immediate inner home depends on our building the cosmic home/environment. If we treat our outer cosmos as our home, we have better chance of making our individual homes homely, and vice versa; there is a mutual influence between the outer and the inner cosmos. The word, rita, is significantly used in Vedas. It refers to the 'order' in the cosmos: both inner and outer. The aim of one's inner home is joy, where there is order, growth and happiness as a result of the holistic approach to reality. When there is an imbalance in the wholeness, the rita is disturbed both in the outer and the inner cosmos. To redeem the situation, we need to get back to the rita of the inner cosmos of moral order. The article refers also to the human consisting of various sheaths (koshas), and to the presence of mudras in our physical human body. Finally, Gandhi too speaks of the Moral Order of the inner rita as the key factor to make a house into a home. The outer cosmic home is realized by the inner cosmic home; and the rita is the essence of outer and inner cosmic home.*

* * * * * * *

Introduction[1]

This paper is an attempt to capture the meaning of cosmos as home. Our immediate home depends on how we are building the cosmic

1 This paper is written to honor Prof. Dr. Pushparajan who has immensely contributed to the pursuit of wisdom in the context of Indian Philosophy. He has been an inspiration to the writer of this paper in many ways. Professor Pushparajan helped this researcher in his work on Ramana Maharshi. As an expression of gratitude to him, this article is written.

home/environment. If we treat our outer cosmos as our home, we have better chance of making our individual homes happy. It could also mean that if our homes are not built on moral order, dharma, then we may tend to destroy our outer home, the cosmos. Both the spheres have to be dealt with as one home. As this period of history when we are forced to become very conscious of our environment and climate change, we need to pay great attention on building the bridge between the outer and the inner cosmos as our home.

Each one of us is challenged to experience the joy of our homes. Both the cosmos, the inner and the outer, influence and affect each other. Each one of us is a blend of both the outer and inner cosmic homes. The *ṛta* or order at home affects the outer home/cosmos. The inner cosmos which is the physical and mental body and the outer cosmos, the nature, influence each other at a gross and subtle level. If there is weakness of *ṛta* in one of the spheres, it affects the other. The task of building the inner cosmos, the home, is difficult. Only when we are concerned with the outer home, the inner home slowly emerges as peaceful. Only a bringing together of both the outer and inner homes could be a remedial measure.

Ṛta in Vedas

The Sanskrit word *ṛta* means truth or order. It is found in the Vedas very many times and it is used for cosmic order. *Ṛta* first refers to the physical order of the universe, more pointedly to the sun and moon, their daily journey across the sky, and the regular seasons. The sun and moon are symbolic figures for man and woman respectively. *Ṛta* is guaranteed by *Varuna* (rain), assisted by *Mitra*, the god of honour. *Ṛta* refers also to the proper sacrifices to the gods. It is the principle of natural order which comes out of the sacrifices offered to many gods of nature. Sacrifices are intimately connected with the order. This notion of order is progressively linked with *dharma*, duty, and *karma*. It refers gently to the moral order of the world, the inner cosmos of human beings.

The root word in *Ṛta* is '*ri*' which means to go, move, rise, tend upward, or *ritam*. It means fixed or settled order, and even divine law

or truth. This word *ṛta* is found 390 times in Ṛg Veda. This is one concept which pervades the whole of Ṛg Veda. It refers to regularity, order, sacrifice and truth. Vedas speak of Prahaspati possessing a powerful bow and '*ṛta as its string*' prepared to `mount the order of *ṛta*.' Scholars say that *ṛta* is first associated with the god of 'Agni' and later on associated more with 'Varuna.' Rita is spread over Heaven and Earth. Everything rejoices in the house of *ṛta*. All beings remain subject to *ṛta*, even gods serve it. The Taittiriya Upanishad brings out beautifully the correlation of *ṛta* and joy like this: "He who knows Brahman who is Truth, Consciousness, and infinite Joy, hidden in the inmost of our soul and in the highest heaven, enjoys all things he desires in communion with the all-knowing Brahman."[2]

Cosmos: The Outer Home

According to Chandogya Upanishad, the cosmos is considered as sky, air and earth. These three aspects are seen as the first portion of creation. These three elements emerge from *ṛta*; these constitute the first portion. The rest three portions remain mysterious. "Prajapati rested in meditation and the three sounds: *bhur*, *bhuvas*, *swar*, earth, air and sky…and from the three sounds came the sound OM. Even as all leaves come from a stem, all words come from the sound OM. OM is the whole universe. OM is in truth the whole universe" It means that OM is found in meditation, the supreme consciousness. Everything evolves from OM and returns to it. In this home there is manifestation of unity and differences. The differences lay in the one quarter called the whole universe where the change is taking place. The other three quarters of the universe is called the heavens, which is immortal and changeless. The seer says, "A quarter of his being is this whole vast universe: the other three quarters are his heaven of immortality."[3] Further Taittiriya Upanishad speaks of the evolution of outer cosmos as follows: 'From Atman—Brhman—the beginning came space. From space came air. From air, fire; from fire, water; from water came solid earth. From the earth came living plants, from plants food and seed; and from seed and food a living being, man.'[4]

2 Taittiriya Up., 2.1, (Penguine Classics), 109-10.
3 Ibid., 3.12.5, 113.
4 Taittiriya Up., 110.

The evolution of creation is culminated in man. The food of all beings is normally plants. The plants come from the five elements; these five elements are the source of our food. Thus the outer home is the source of our home. Taittiriya Upanishad also speaks that God is the first source of these elements. One who denies God denies oneself. "Who denied God, denies himself. Who affirms God, affirms himself."[5] The essence of this creation is joy. This joy comes from God. Who could live and who could breathe if the joy of Brahman filled not the universe?[6]

> Once Bhrigu Varuni went to his father Varuna and said: 'Father, explain to me the mystery of Brahman.' Then his father spoke to him of the food of the earth, of the breath of life…unto whom all beings have come, by whom they all live, and unto whom they all return. He is Brahman.' …Seek to know Brahman by tapas, by prayer, because Brahman is prayer.[7]

Three times Bhrigu Varuni asked the question to know more about the mystery of Brahman, and received the same answer. So Bhrigu went and practiced tapas, spiritual prayer. And then he saw that Brahman is *Joy: For from Joy all beings have come, by joy they all live, and unto joy they all return.*[8] This was the vision of Bhrigu Varuni. We are called to have the same vision of joy. This joy is essentially linked with tapas and meditation; this is the short cut to happiness. *It is the ṛta* of life. *Tirumantiran* refers to the same, but in a different way. With the heart one can discover the joy of home. "He is Brahman, He is Hara, and is seated in every heart, He blossoms as Divine Effulgence which knows no contraction and is the Order Eternal."[9]

Cosmos: The Inner Home

The main emphasis of Taittriya Upanishad is that the nature of creation is *joy*. Psalm 8 of the Old Testament also points out that the highest expression of creation is man and he is called to be joyful.

5 Ibid. 2.6., 110.
6 Ibid.2.7., 110.
7 Ibid. 3.1-6., 111.
8 Ibid.
9 *TIrumandiram*, no. 15, 20.

One can confidently say that the inner *ṛta* of home is founded with truth, consciousness and joy.

Home is the place where the assertion of the subjects takes place. Every person in the house needs to be treated as subject. They are not objects. Male or female they may be, but they are primarily subjects having certain dignity and freedom. Justice and equality is the essence of love in the family, the inner home. Home can become alive with love, truth, compassion and freedom. Home is the community of seekers of truth, awareness and joy. This Inner cosmos, home, is possible only with the outer cosmos.

Crisis of Imbalance

We have lost in course of time the balance of tapas and joy in the inner and outer home or cosmos. Today's world is more crowded with the hospitals, ration shops, film theatres, restaurants and resorts. True homes are dwindling but more houses are being built. The rhythms of our homes are disturbed and imbalanced.

On 23rd April, 2016, the *New Indian Express* flashed: 'Weatherman predicts hottest summer ever. The meteorological department experts warn this year could be hardest.' The same News Paper on 24th April 2016 published that at Titlagarh the climate shot up to 48c. It was a boiling heat. It also blamed that the heat is due to the growing concrete jungle. There is poor green coverage in the growing cities; it is hot hell. Chennai has the least grass cover among the metropolitan cities in India. There are more draught areas than before. People don't have enough drinking water. People have to walk many miles to find good water to drink. The power generation out of dam water would be hit very badly. The earth cannot be said to be a 'cosmic home.' It is not purely a natural calamity but a human-made calamity. The rain fall is more by cyclone than by monsoon. There is definitely a change of climate and it is no more a friendly cosmic home.

Scientists speak in scientific terms of this phenomenon as Carbon emissions. 'Carbon emissions' refer to the man-made production of a series of gases that accumulate in the atmosphere and help to

warm it up. Yet, not all of these greenhouse gases (GHGs) are very harmful. They are needed to warm up the atmosphere.[10] The 'carbon emissions' is the "trap heat sent from the Earth's surface in a physical trick (phenomenon) which was discovered by Svaante Arrhenius in 1896, and it is known as *the greenhouse effect*. Sunlight, either direct from the sun or reflected back from shiny parts of the Earth can pass straight through as thermal energy. As carbon emissions build up in the atmosphere, the amount of heat they trap and send back to the surface increases. This steadily increases the temperature of the earth and leads to the global warming.[11]

Carbon emissions mostly come from our use of energy: fossil fuels such as oil, gas, and coal. Industrial Revolution has started this process. It has been driven by the world's economies and has released carbon emissions increasingly. Energy-intensive industries such as steel and cement have particularly contributed to high carbon emissions. This has led the greenhouse effect.[12]

"The greenhouse effect is the rise in temperature on earth as certain gases in the atmosphere trap energy. Six main greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide (CO2), methane (CH2), and nitrous oxide (N2O), plus three fluorinated industrial gases, hydrofloro carbons,[13] perfluoro carbons, and sulphur hexafluoride."[14] Many of these GHGs are actually life-enabling. For without them, heat would escape back into space and the earth's average temperature would be a lot colder. However, if the greenhouse effect becomes stronger, then more heat gets trapped than needed, and the earth might become less habitable for humans, plants and animals. In other words scientists say that GHGs are like salt: "A small amount of salt is essential for human life: slightly more salt in our diet often makes food tastier; but too much salt can be harmful. In similar way, GHGs are essential for our planet, the planet may be able to deal with slightly increased levels of such gases, but

10 Desrocheres, *The Challenge of Climate Change*, 32.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., 33.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.

too much will affect the health of the whole planet."[15] It is very true to our food and the joy of our home. Right balance of everything in our life, like food, keeps our home, homely.

The National Academies (US) begin their reflection on the *Impacts of Change* with these words: "Climate change will affect ecosystems and human systems, such as agriculture, transportation, and health infrastructure, in ways we are only beginning to understand.[16]" So we are on the threshold of catastrophic climate change. There is definitely an imbalance in the climate of the earth caused by the air and earth pollutions. It is a serious call to ponder over the relation between our life style of consumerism and the need to have the right proportion of production.

Befriending the Earth

Abreu Suren names the solution for the problem of our time as befriending the earth. We need our primary home, the earth, more greenish. We need to befriend our wastes. We need to reduce the level of making wastes of our food and surroundings. In life what we call waste is not waste at all provided we have the right perspective of life. It has to be a life for all.

Scientists calculate that around 4-5 billion years ago the photosynthetic life (*cyanobacteria*) at the primordial Ocean started using the brilliance of sunlight to grow and released oxygen as a waste! This waste product was the future of life. The young earth changed its aura from the methane and ammonia to oxygen and nitrogen. Over the next couple of billion years, life continued to spread, and the young mother saw it with pride with wide variety of plants.[17] Thus mother earth is teaching a lesson to transform the so called wastes into life.

Almost 5.5 million years have passed since evolution separated the first erect beings. Homo sapiens, possessing wisdom and reason around 30,000 years, wandered, moving about in small tribes in search of food and shelter. Hunter-gatherers, they depended on nature

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., 44.
17 Suren, *Befriending the Earth*, 19.

for survival. There was no inequality among them. Each had plenty to live with. All members of the tribe contributed in different ways to this goal of happy living.[18] There was unity of life. Now this wholesome life is threatened. We have moved towards a pleasure-based life than joy-filled home.

What we consider waste is not waste but only a change. Understanding the beauty of change in our life, even at the physical level enhances our life; for example, the use of our own water. Dr. T. Wilson Deachman, Ph.C., M.D. says that it is not a waste. He writes in reference to urine therapy: "What cannot be cured by the forces of the body cannot be cured by the forces outside the body…The wiser of the ancient Greeks used nothing but urine for the treatment of wounds. The Eskimos even to this day adopt the same measures."[19] What we are accustomed to regard as useless dead leaves are the very opposite of useless, and should be dug back into the soil instead of being swept away by the gardener…The idea that Nature is wasteful is erroneous. She only appears wasteful to us because we do not understand her.[20]

The right understanding of Nature and Creation is of paramount importance in solving the imbalances of the world. Isa Upanishad says: "Behold the universe in the glory of God: and all that lives and moves on earth. Leaving the transient, find joy in the Eternal… Standing still, He overtakes those who run… He moves, and he moves not, He is far, and he is near, He is within all, and he is outside all. Who sees all beings in his own Self, and his own Self in all beings, loses all fear.'[21] This is the secret of life. There is no object in the universe. Everything is a subject, full of joy because it contains life, the mystery of joy. Thomas Berry comments, "The universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects."

Home within Home

Saiva Siddhanta philosophy proposes a way of building a home out of cosmos. According to it both the outer cosmos and the physical body

18 Ibid., 25.
19 Ibid., 16-17.
20 Ibid., 20.
21 Isa Up., (Penquin Classics), 49.

are nothing but one home. Saiva Siddhantin claims that our human body is a universe in miniature. The elements of the outer cosmos are the very components of all living beings. Even our physical body is composed of these five elements. They are ether, air, fire, water and earth. There is an order in them. It is in the order of subtlety. Normally we begin from earth to ether or sky. It is in the order of grossness. One can validly speak of both the ways in understanding the reality as a phenomenon. Each is evolution of the immediate and total other. Earth contains all the elements within it in a particular portion. Earth is a home for all the elements of cosmos. If there is proper order among the elements, there is health of the human body. The basic threefold diseases of human body is the imbalance of three basic elements namely air, fire and water. These are three inner elements within the sky and earth. The more balance among them is the *ṛta* of the body which is called health. It is the foundation of true joy.

Among them the most important element is air. From this other elements emerge. The more one is aware of it, there is stillness. It is the experience of inner reality, called Brahman or Atman or God. The element of fear is gently conquered. It paves the way to control the passion and greediness of the mind. Thus the inner cosmos paves the way to influence the outer cosmos. In the life of Jesus in the Gospel according to Mark, (chapter four), the calming of wind and waves comes from the inner peace of Jesus, his stillness prompts the stillness of wind and water.

There is also home within home. There are five body levels before one realizes the innermost home in oneself. Our ignorance is wrongly identifying each body or stage as our home and becoming stagnant. If we misidentify the outer homes as true homes, there is no inner peace and joy. If we get stuck at any one stage, we don't make a home of ourselves. The five types of identification as our final end or home is the source of our suffering. They are the sheathes or outer covers of our true self. The first home is our physical body named as '*annamaya kosa*.' The food and drink makes up the physical body, the outermost cover and home. The next is '*pranamaya kosa*,' the gross and subtle body. It is the breath-body, causal body for activities of physical

survival. The third home is '*manomaya kosa*.' It is the basis of all our mental activities which are subtle in nature. '*Vijnanamaya kosa*' is the very subtle home of insights and inspirations which guide our life at a deeper level. The last home is '*Anandamaya kosa*' denoting our desires and pleasures which control and move our life. They are the real shadows of our true joy or bliss. We are very close to true self and yet not in advaitic relationship. This is the mystery of home. The more one is aware of what stage of his home he is at present, the freer he becomes within. Here for him there is only one home, comfortable at inner and outer homes. He is transcendent, yet immanent.

Mudrās of inner home

Mudrās is another form of inner cosmos related to the outer cosmos. The physical and mental body of human person through nerves is found in miniature in the palms as well as in the feet of one's body. Though the nerve centre is found in the brain, it is easily available in the palm of the hand. In meditating along with the body postures if the *mudrās* are formed, it brings about healing effect to the body. Thus the integration of meditation and *mudrās* bring out better health and wisdom. *Mudrās* is done with the awareness of breath for effectiveness. For example the '*chin mudra*' is helpful for the posture of meditation to bring healing at the physical and mental level. It is a belief that by the touch of the tip of the five fingers healing is brought about—the art of being in contact with one another. It is a medical system of healing oneself without costly medicine and doctor. The person alone can bring healing by activating nerves and bringing balance of body and mind. The *mudrās* are nothing but giving simple pressure on the different cosmic elements found on the tip of our fingers.

All the five fingers of a palm stand for each cosmic element. In terms of five fingers the order of outer cosmos is slightly changed in the inner cosmos of the physical and mental body, the gross and subtle body respectively. The thump finger stands for the element of fire, and the index finger represents the air element. The middle finger points to sky or ether. The ring finger is related with land (earth) and the little finger is associated with water. The thumb and little finger are placed at either end of one's palm. In a palm there is the power

of fire (at thumb finger) and water (at the little finger). The middle finger stands out in the middle dividing the land and water from air and fire. The four fingers which stand apart from thumb finger which activates and makes other fingers alive by keeping the right amount of heat. If not, the physical body loses its warmth and vitality or over heated leading to fever. Thus the five cosmic elements which form the physical body are the source of health. When one controls the mind and body, one brings order into the five elements of outer cosmos and causes good health. One may not believe it as a scientific fact. But those who have practiced the *mudrās* system have found healing. So the *mudrās* system is a home within a home in the frame work of cosmos. Palms and feet are the fine contact points with the sky and earth, making cosmic home at each one's reach.

Moral Order / Subtle Ṛta

Moral order in one's personal and family life affects the cosmological order, the *ṛta*. The people of Vedic time understood that *tapas* and sacrifices were intimately related to *ṛta*, order of the cosmos. It is a strong opinion of our *munis* and *yogis*. Whenever the moral order in humanity gets weakened by war, famine, flood and outspread diseases the outer cosmos gets affected. Though there is never the perfect moral order in the world of humanity, the *seers* and *ṛṣis* restored back the moral order in the annals of history. The basic five values form moral order. These values protect as well as enhance life. The moral order is the basis of peace, justice, compassion, truth and love. The Indian spiritual masters spoke of the fivefold step of moral order to enjoy life. '*Ahimsa'* (non-killing) and '*Satya'* (telling truth) are considered the core values. Mahatma Gandhiji followed these values in his political journey for freedom. The other three moral values are non-stealing, not possessing others' property, the right use of one's sexual behavior or chastity chosen according to family or sannyasa life. These are the borders of moral order. The practice of these values gently leads one to detachment of earthly life. According to Muṇḍaka Upanishad, if there is no tapas in the moral world, no one can reach the higher wisdom. One has to be mindful of this subtle *ṛta* of moral order. It alone can protect the outer cosmos. True home within is the guarantee of true home without, the cosmic home.

Conclusion

If we make the macro and micro homes as our homes, then the journey within this world will be a happy one. We need to treat all things in these homes as subjects, our brothers and sisters like Francis of Assisi. Then alone we are building a home of joy; then Brahman is seen as Atman, one discovers the relation between food and medicine, our sight can catch the herbal quality within the plant. Every human person may realize the Advaitic relation of Atman-Brahman, one in many and many in one. We will produce neither unnecessary waste nor natural waste. There is home within a home. Every human person is a home of the divine. This right perspective alone can redeem life. Let us discover the *ṛta* of outer and inner homes; let us make the outer home, our home.

INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY
A Non-Dualistic Dual Relationship

D. John Chelladurai

Abstract: *This paper deliberates on the 'organic relationship' between society and individual, through a series of analyses on individual's 'self,' exterior self, and the socio economic fabrics s/he forms. It is inspired by the writings of Herbert Spencer, Peter Berger and Alfred N. Whitehead, and particularly the advaitic oneness espoused by Indian Philosophy. Substance is someone's (producer's) concrete expression of his/her self (occasion of experience). It 'arises and coalesces' with individual (acquirer) in his/her experiencing oneself, and finally in becoming a human. This transaction engenders a metabolic relationship between the maker and beneficiary, and enables them experience a life of seamless oneness. Social human, as clustered within, is a 'mega self.' This thoroughly overlapping coalesced life makes the relationship between individual and society one of non-dualistic at the subtle level. As life comes to individual as a unique realization distinct from that of others, individual remains primary and thereby the relationship between individual and the society is dualistic at manifest level.*

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Introduction

Individual, endowed with immense potential, is a complex personality. Emerging out of the bonding of a number of such personalities, society proves to be incomprehensibly complex. Diverse theories have been propounded by scholars over the nature of relationship

between individual and society, each reflecting a facet of its reality. 'Human Life' as personal endeavour and realization shows itself as 'individual.' As society (collective pursuit) is the base of human life, an essential precondition for individual to experience oneself as s/he does today, society is considered paramount. In order to better the prospect of life, individual inevitably stepped into collective effort, the perceivable form of which is society. Hence it is believed society is immanent in individual, and that is why s/he is called *homo socius*. A section of thinkers like Durkheim says that society is external to individual while scholars like Herbert Spencer argues it the other way. Indian philosophical insight offers a unique response to this ever undulating question, proposing that individual and society can be one and the same. It is akin to 'coin and its sides.' In general they are one and in particular they are different. Modern sociology has come to realize this integral oneness even empirically.

This paper attempts to understand, in the light of established theories, the relationship between individual and society as it appears non-dualistic dual in nature. As unique and distinct identity of the human individual has well been established, this paper focuses more on the indivisible (non-dualistic) nature of the relationship between individual and society, and less on their independent (dualistic) identities. This is presented in two parts: first part, entitled as 'Correlation' reviews the studied views on the primacy of individual and the indispensability of society to understand their independent identities. The second part, 'Organic Relationship' attempts to understand the indivisible oneness that appears to exist between individual and society through a series of analyses on individual 'Self,' Exterior Self, and socio economic fabrics.

1. Correlation

1.1. Review

The relationship between society and individual is a primordial question upon which enquiries have been conducted along the civilization. We witness it in History and Literature, which narrate the experience of individual becoming a society. Philosophy is primarily

concerned with human relationship with oneself (know thyself), existence (acquiring wherewithal through society) and fellow humans (values, rationality, language). Sociology is dedicated for the study of individual's life in society. Religions prescribe tenets essentially to streamline social living and regulate individual behavior in it.

Realizing the inherent tussle between the individual and the society in fulfilling the needs, Socrates proposed rational '*Dialogue'*; Plato presented '*Republic'*; Thomas Hobbes posited the State of Nature to ensure equal rights and peace for all (*Leviathan*); John Locke emphasized on Natural Rights (*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*); David Hume worked on individual reason and social morality (*Treatise on Human Nature*); Adam Smith explained how individualist pursuit leads to social development (*The Wealth of Nations*); Immanuel Kant cautioning against excessive importance to individual over society, suggested that social peace ought to be the end and means of individual pursuit (*Critique of Pure Reason*); and Karl Marx proposed a classless society and optimized communities for the best interest of its members, namely, individuals (*The Communist Manifesto*).[1]

Though the stand point of these great thinkers varies, there is an underlying commonality, that human individual finds life in society, and society enables the individual to lead a life of fulfillment.

1.2. Individual

There is a strong argument to uphold the primacy of individual, even though humans are recognized as *homo socius.* Every individual is unique, no two humans are alike. Individual's potential to develop and be creative seems endless. Ayn Rand says that every human is an "independent sovereign entity who possesses an inalienable right to his own life, a right derived from his nature as a rational being."[2] In comparing the individual with the society, Maclver argues that only

1 Rory O'Brien, *Philosophical History of Civil Society*, web.net, 1999, accessed on June 12, 2016.

2 Harry Binswanger, ed., *Objectivism from A to Z*, Vol. IV, Section: Individualism. http://aynrandlexicon.com/lexicon/individualism.html, accessed on Aug 03, 2016.

individuals are real. "For, he is a self, a centre of activity, of feeling, of function, of purpose."[3] Human beings are not mere subjects molded by socio-cultural forces. We are creatures and creators of socio-cultural systems, argues Max Weber, who says "society is built up out of the interpretations of individuals."[4]

While society plays an instrumental role in the making of individual, society as such would not exist apart from the real activity of its members, says Spirkin. He argues, "Society possesses no wealth whatever. It fights no battles. It grows no grain. It produces no tools for making things or weapons for destroying them. It is not society as such but man who does all these, who possesses them, who creates everything and fights for everything. Society is not some impersonal being that uses the individual as a means of achieving its aims. All world history is nothing but the daily activity of individuals pursuing their aims."[5] Ludwig von Mises notes: "The individual lives and acts within society. But society is nothing but the combination of individuals for cooperative effort."[6]

Religion recognizes individual with a 'soul' or potential for individual salvation; whereas society is regarded as an external condition for individual to realize the soul. In this sense the human is primary in the duality between individual and society. Endowed with intelligence, reasoning, consciousness, mind and spirit, individual stands as a matchless unique being.

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3 Robert Morrison Maclever, *Society*, III Ed (1949), as quoted by Puja Mondal, *Sociology*, http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/sociology/relationship-between-individual-and-society/35095/, accessed on June 12, 2016.

4 Frank W Elwell, *The Sociology of Max Weber*, http://dl4a.org/uploads/pdf/Max%20Weber.pdf , accessed July 11, 2016.

5 Alexander Spirkin, *Dialectical Materialism: On Human Being and Being Human*, https://www.marxists.org/reference /archive /spirkin/works/dialectical-materialism/ch05-s04.html, accessed on June 16, 2016.

6 Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action*, 4th rev. ed. (Irvington-on-Hudson, N.Y.: Foundation for Economic Education 1996 [1963]), 143, as quoted by Arthur Foulkes, https://fee.org/articles/the-individual-and-society/, accessed on June 17, 2016.

1.3. Society

While recognizing the unique nature of individual, researchers are of the view that the preeminence of society in the life of humans cannot be compromised. Society, with all its historic experiences, equipments, systems and structures, grooms individual to be a member of a sophisticated social order. Devoid of this elaborate arrangement, individual would remain as a member of animal kingdom, struggling for safety and fulfillment (existence). This has been widely researched and established.

By virtue of being an organism belonging to an animal Kingdom, humans potentially enjoys a strange independence. Like every other being does, it is biologically possible for individual to live all by oneself, without society. Robert E Park argues that man is not born social, is born to be made social human.[7] However, that life in isolation is only biological.

Intelligence of early individuals led them to forge relationship, pool energy and resources and create systems to ensure a life that is otherwise far beyond the scope of individual. The present humans, as they are today, according to Herbert Spencer, are biologically and psychologically equipped to live in groups, in society. And society has become an essential condition for human life to arise and to continue to be what s/he is now.[8]

Taking a stronger position, Peter L Berger and Thomas Luckmann argue that 'it is impossible for man to develop in isolation.' "Solitary human being is being on the animal level which man shares with other animals."[9] If a child is kept in isolation away from contact with his fellow human right from birth, it will grow up into a 'feral man' without any idea of communication, and concept of 'right' and

7 Robert Ezra Park, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 116.

8 Herbert Spencer, *Organismic Theory of Society*, sociologyguide.com/individual-society/organismic-theory-of-society.php: accessed on June 17, 2016.

9 Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise On The Sociology Of Knowledge*, (New York: Anchor Books, Garden City, 1966), 51.

'wrong.' Only by a process of continuously externalizing oneself man can remain as human.

Thomas Hobbes was of the opinion that society is a necessity as a means for the protection of men against the consequences of their own nature… In order to protect himself against the evil consequences of his own nature man organized himself in society in order to live in peace with all.[10] Expressing similar view Rousseau says, society is the body humans created to address the conflict individuals faced within and with the rest. He calls it the general will.[11] The civilized life of humans with all its elaborate comforts is a product of society. As Durkheim says, institutions of society pattern our actions and even shape our expectations to be civilized humans. He further says, society confronts us as an objective fact. It encompasses our entire life.[12] For Durkheim, society is reality; it is first in origin and importance to the individual.[13]

According to Peter Berger society not only controls our movements but shapes our identity, our thought and our emotions. The structures of society become the structures of our own consciousness.[14] Society does not stop at the surface of our skins, Peter Berger postulates; we are entrapped by our own social nature.[15] Society, Alexander Spirkin explains, does exist outside the individual as "social environment in the form of a historically shaped system of relations with rich material and spiritual culture that is independent of his will and consciousness.

10 NPTEL – *Humanities and Social Sciences – Introduction to Sociology*, http://nptel.ac.in/courses/109103023/download/Lecture%203.pdf, accessed on July, 03, 2016.

11 Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, as referred to *Social Contract Theory*, Sociologyguide.com/ individual - society / social-contract-theory.php: accessed on June 17, 2016.

12 http://www.sociologyguide.com/individual-society/interrelationship-between-individual-society.php: accessed on June 17, 2016.

13 Emile Durkheim as quoted by Puja Mondal, *Sociology*, http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/sociology/relationship-between-individual-and-society/35095/

14 Peter L Berger, *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective*, (New York: Open Road Integrated Media). http://www.sociologyguide.com/individual-society/interrelationship-between-individual-society.php: accessed on June 17, 2016.

15 Peter L Berger: accessed on June 17, 2016.

The individual floats in this environment all his life.[16] While individual is unique, Robert Macfarlane argues, the person is not independent; in fact the person is thoroughly interdependent. Individuals develop with the active support of the society and societies develop by the creative contributions of individuals.[17] As *homo socius*,[18] the life we lead today is a product of society. Devoid of society, individual loses (this) life. This 'individual' appears to be all society and no individual.[19] In this sense, "Society is but a collective name for a number of individuals," states Herbert Spencer.[20]

Society, endowed with historically shaped ideas, concepts, tools, techniques, concepts, language and memory, stands as a unique body, moulding biological beings into a sophisticated civilized human. In the light of these statements from eminent scholars, we understand that society is of paramount importance in the life of individual. As an enabler of individual, society stands as an entity different from Individuals.

2. Organic Relationship

Empirical analysis into the systemic life of humans reveals that there exists a fundamental unit-whole relationship between individual and the social order individual lives in. Each in the absence of the other appears to be non-existent. And the gap between individual and society narrows down to the extent of both being seen as one and

16 A. Spirkin, *Dialectical Materialism: On Human Being and Being Human*, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/spirkin/works/dialectical-materialism/ch05-s04.html: accessed on July 10, 2016.

17 Robert Macfarlane, *Process of Human & Social Development, Development Theory*, ICPD Webite, 1999. Accessed on July 10, 2016.

18 Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise on the Sociology of Knowledge*, (New York: Anchor Books, Garden City, 1966), 51. Accessed June 12, 2016.

19 Hirsch, Paul, Stuart Michaels and Ray Friedman, "Clean Models vs. Dirty Hands: Why Economics Is Different from Sociology," In *Structures of Capital: The Social Organization of the Economy*, ed., Sharon Zukin and Paul DiMaggio, (Cambridge; New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 39-56.

20 *The Principles of Sociology*, in Three Volumes (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1898). Vol. 1. 5/1/2016. § 212

the same entity. Herbert Spencer, Alexander Spirkin and Alfred North Whitehead have contributed to this realization substantially.

Herbert Spencer advocates organismic theory. He compares the relationship between society and the individual with the relationship of body with that of its various parts. The body and its parts are interdependent. Neither can exist without the other. Likewise individuals are indispensable for the composition of society and society is essential for the very existence of the individuals,[21] and the realization of human life. Robert K Merton too views society as an organism with various parts, and each part has a function to perform.[22] This analogy in fact leads us to the realization that body-parts are not just interdependent, they are composite. Together they give purpose and existence to each other.

Analyzing the oneness of individual and society, Alexander Spirkin says, an individual does not float with the river; he is the turbulently flowing river itself. [23] He further says, society is the human being in his social relations, and every human being is an individual embodiment of social relations. [24]

This oneness is not just contemporary in its expanse; it encompasses all ages in its present existence. Individual is the living memory of history, says Spirkin; as a personality s/he is a concentration of various strata of culture, influenced not only by modern mass media but also by the writings of all times and every nation, he is the focus of all the wealth of knowledge, abilities, skills, and wisdom that have been amassed through the ages."[25] Reflecting upon the thoroughness of individual becoming the society, Spirkin observes, "Man is a kind

21 Herert Spencer, bhttp://www.preservearticles.com/2011100414555/what-is-the-relation-between-society-and-individual.html : Accessed June 12, 2016.

22 Robert K Merton, *Theories and Functionalism*, http://study.com/academy/lesson/robert-k-merton-theories-and-functionalism.html: Accessed on June 12, 2016.

23 Alexander Spirkin, *Dialectical Materialism: On Human Being and Being Human*, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive /spirkin/works/dialectical-materialism/ch05-s04.html; accessed on July 10, 2016.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

of super-dense living atom in the system of social reality. He is a concentration of the actively creative principle in this system."[26]

This unique arrangement of individual and society being one another organically is explored here, first through an analysis of 'self' and then 'social fabric.'

2.1. Self

We may begin the analysis of 'self' with the esoteric enquiry, 'Who am I?' Philosophers say, 'I am what I am'; Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz in his *Law of Indiscernible*, expresses "Everything is what it is."[27] Wilhelm M Wundt represented it with the symbolic formulation, 'A is A.'[28]

Transcendental exploration of 'self' proceeds by '*neti-neti*' (*not this – not this*). Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi guides us by this means into a temporal enquiry of 'who am I.' This enquiry leads us towards the realization of a self (*śūnyata*) beyond the bounds of corporeal world. In a metaphysical paradox, the same exploration leads us to an all encompassing (this too - this too) eternal Self. In the final sense, the absolute Nothing is the same as absolute Everything in the light of advaita oneness; leading us to an enlightened realization of 'I am That.'

Gandhi's Truth realization goes in consonance with advaita principles. He said, "Truth is absolute, an all encompassing Reality." Absolute is absolute only when It contains everything within and leaves nothing apart. He saw life as a "manifestation of Truth." As is the Truth, its manifestation *life* too encompasses within innumerable components.

26 Ibid.

27 Forrest, Peter, "The Identity of Indiscernibles," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/identity-indiscernible/>. Accessed on Aug 07, 2016.

28 Kim, Alan, "Wilhelm Maximilian Wundt," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/wilhelm-wundt/>. Accessed on Aug 07, 2016.

Gandhi thus connected the part with the whole and saw homogeneity between the two, for him life and Truth are convertible terms; Truth and Nonviolence are convertible, Way and Goal are convertible, Individual and Society are convertible. For Gandhi, 'I am That,' and 'that' is society.[29]

2.1.1. I Am What I Have

The constituents of human personality may be classified as cognitive processes (mind, intelligence, thought, memory, consciousness..), somatic components (body organs, health, energy,..), emotive traits (affection, tolerance, trust..), physical instruments (tools, vessels, stationery…), material property (house, car, ATM…), cultural (family, relationship…) and active (actions of all kind). Individual (stems from 'indivisible') is considered to be the sum manifestation of all these components. In that sense, a person (self) is the sum of all what s/he has. Individual understands oneself as master of all his/her constituents. The self (whole) views its parts as its possession, claiming them as 'my hand,' 'my mind,' 'my health,' 'my family,' 'my house,' 'my car,' 'my deed,' and raises to the realization of a unified whole… In the final sense, the 'creator and the creation are one and the same'; the possessor and the possession are one and the same; and thus the self claims itself as its possession, saying 'my-self'; I am what I have.

2.1.2. I Am What I Do

There is an integral connection between human's action (animate) the materials (tools) one possesses and the society (condition) one lives. They constitute a triadic life. "Life refers to the history of activities that an organism undertakes."[30] As the saying goes, 'A tree is known by its fruit and a man by his deeds.' We manifest ourselves through our deeds. Karma Yoga deals with it. If Osho Rajneesh proposed yogic experience through nearly every action: eating meditation,

29 This idea is reflected in his '*Sarvodaya'* maxim: 'The welfare of individual contains in the welfare of all.'

30 Chris McKay, *What Is Life? It's a Tricky Often Confusing Question*, www.astrobio.net, Sept 18, 2014

drinking meditation, walking meditation, it is because the individual expresses as well as experiences oneself through one's acts the sum of which constitute one's life. The life of an individual at any given moment is what that person is doing at that moment. In the language of the economist 'I am what I do.'[31]

2.1.3. I Am What I Acquire (Consume)

What I have and what I do are in tandem with what I acquire. The tools we employ co-determine the effectiveness of actions in life. Civilized life is determined by the ideas, goods and services (techniques, instruments and infrastructures) we avail.

In the passage of civilization we find a weaver without loom, a gobbler without chisel, a vendor without measuring unit, an auditor without a calculator, a house without plumbing is far less sophisticated than the one who had them. While unscrupulous consumerism is ethically detestable, it is also agreed that the level of development one enjoys is in direct proportion to the number of commodities (tools) a person brings in to one's service.[32] More the tools greater is the sophistication!

As all these commodities come to us from the society one way or the other, individual identity is borne out of what one consumes. Thus, 'I am what I consume.'

2.1.4. I Am What My Society Provides

Individual growth is commensurate with the sum ability of the society to provide for its members. The individual develops with the active

31 It is analogous to 'Money is what money does.'

32 A commodities survey conducted in the remote villages of Gondia District revealed that people live below poverty line consumes over 300 products. Market survey tells, middle income families consume anywhere between 1000 and 5000 products, with the one consuming a thousand items labeled as 'lower middle' and 5000 and above items as 'upper middle' class. A popular chain of stores declared to have over 6000 items stacked at their shelf for buyers. This is a miniscule figure in comparison with the internet retailers, who claims to have millions of commodities for regular sale. Development of an individual is in direct proportion with the quantum of ideas and appliances one owns.

support of the society.[33] Individual cannot acquire anything that the society does not have or cannot provide to actualize the present growth. One has to invent or innovate if at all to do so. Even for this, society has to provide the basics such as concepts, information, physical means and methods. Devoid of social feeding individual born as human would remain as feral.

The standard of individual is in direct proportion to the standard of the society. It can be understood from the pattern of human's mobility. People migrate towards places that in their estimate can provide them what they require.

2.1.5. I Am What My Society Is

What I have (my body, my tools, my ideas) determines my actions (life) and the very self. All these are essentially drawn from the society. The general will (Rousseau) surrounds individual completely and unconditionally, structures of society become the structures of our own consciousness. Therefore, as Peter Berger says, "society does not stop at the surface of our skins," but goes deep into our being.

If an individual manifests oneself through one's action, and the action is determined by the tools and techniques one possesses, if the possession is an offering from society, and the nature of society determines what it can offer, then as Spirkin says, 'society is the human being in his social relations, and every human being is an individual embodiment of social relations.' This analysis thus leads us into the realization that Individual and society are one. I am what my society is.

2.2. Fabric Analysis

The organic relationship between individuals and their interrelations can also be understood through the analysis of social fabric. In a society if people are the warp, all forms of exchanges among them, and the dependencies, interactions as well as affinity (centripetal emotions) form the weft, together weaving their social fabric. Analysis on the personality reveals that (sum action is life) the constituents of

33 Robert Macfarlane, *Process of Human & Social Development: Development Theory*, ICPD Website, 1999.

'weft' too are individuals. We may explore the organically intertwined relationship between society and individual, first through the analysis of 'economic fabric' followed by analysis of 'social fabric.'

2.2.1. Economic Fabric

Individual life is supported by a number of articles (I am what I acquire). These articles play an instrumental role in life. It is reported that a middle class family consumes around 2000 items[34] and realizes life through the sum of all those materials. An individual can live without most of these instrumental commodities; in a remote situation one may survive without any of them even. But that would be a different 'I'. The present 'I' alone is the reality and all other possibilities are suppositions / non-real. This 'I' is a reality on account of the coordinated play of all these commodities. Each of the 2000 commodities is the outcome of the labor of a number of people. It is estimated that a pencil is the outcome of the joint effort of 1054 people. In the absolute sense, Leonard E Read enumerates the million people involved in the making of pencil in his famous work "I, Pencil."

A thorough navigation into the route of each of these commodities would reveal something like this: We consume over 2000 items; behind each item there are over thousand hands; behind what we are economically (consumer of 2000 items), lie over two million hands – that many lives. Life of each individual is a manifestation of the efforts of two million humans. So, when individual eats it is not one hand moving from plate to mouth, but million hands moving in unison to feed that individual. Short of even some of these hands, food will not raise from the plate, leave alone reaching the mouth. Individual is not single, s/he is a cluster within.

That is in the first orbit. Each of these two million individuals is not an individual, but a cluster by themselves. That means, the economic human is a bundle of two million into two million human relations.

34 Delhi Chamber of Commerce listed over 753 classified heads of commodities sold in India under which hundreds of thousands of items are enlisted. For example, hundreds of grain varieties available in Indian Market come under one head 'food grain' //www.delhichambers.com/TradeDirectory.asp?ALP=All

This reality at the second economic orbit level leads us to understand, 'I am a society.'

2.2.2. Social Fabric

The goods and services that help individual to realize one's self are not just materials and physical transaction. Each of them is a social process as well as an individualization process. 'Products involved in our daily actions mediate social relations, promote experience, evoke feelings and affect and shape our attitude and behavior,' states Mihaly Csikszentmihali. He goes on to say 'meaning of our private lives is built with these household objects.'[35] Individual expresses oneself through the medium of these commodities, as well as experiences oneself through them.

A teacher expresses oneself through one's act of teaching; the teacher in him/her manifests through the teaching (I am what I do). And this manifestation comes through the coordinated exercise of a number of components (tools and instruments): mind, body and materials, the latter includes the chalk / pen / pencil / notebook, board and other stationery. They constitute integrally the professional life of a teacher. These commodities are not 'used' by the person; s/he manifests oneself through a combination of all these components. Take away the components the person would cease to be the reality that s/he is now.

Whitehead calls material or substance as 'entity' and says, in the life of the individual "these entities arise or coalesce."[36] In becoming a teacher, for instance, the chalk on the board becomes a letter (symbol) representing an idea, which in turn becomes a 'message' and a 'teaching' the teacher intends to deliver. This further transforms into learning for the student and a realization of his/her very self. Thus chalk is a filament in the fabric of teacher's self expression as well as student's self experiencing.

35 Mihaly Csikszentimihali, *Good Business: Leadership, Fow and the Making of Meaning*, (Basic Books, Inc, 2003) ISBN 0-06-465-02608-7.

36 Javier Monserrat, *Alfred N. Whitehead, On Process Philosophy and Theology*, (2008), 829, Pensamiento Vol. 64, ISSSN 0031-4749, https://revistas.upcomillas.es/index.php/pensamiento/article/download/5135/4948*:* accessed August 07, 2016.

The food one eats transforms into physical energy and manifests in the form of one's day to day act. The lesson taught by the person, the conversation s/he made, the song sung, the dance performed, in the metabolic sense, are food-energy converted into physical, mental and audio expressions; they are transformed form of the food that s/he ate the day before. Food is a filament in the fabric of every expression and experience.

In the expression of life, here teaching, concrete substances (chalk and food) transform themselves into an abstract idea (message) and merge effortlessly with the 'self' of student and teacher evenly. Thus in each act of an individual we find commodities coalesce into singular expression or experience.

On the hind side, food represents farmer's manifest 'occasion of experience' as Whitehead would put it;[37] so does chalk represent manufacturer's. While chalk does a concrete to abstract transformation in the act of teaching, it by itself is a concrete expression of an abstract idea. 'Chalk' is an abstract idea upon which innumerable people invested their labour to make chalk a concrete reality. To put it precisely, 'chalk' is a manifest experience of a number of people. Thereby chalk carries with it all those people in its play on the board. So it's not one hand but a million hands in unison that are writing on the board. If what I do is 'I' then the chalk and its innumerable makers are co-performers of the act of 'teaching' and, to that extent, part of 'I' the teacher. So, when a teacher teaches, through the act s/he indeed manifests his/her 'mega self,' the society that she is.

At the front, the learning too is a process of manifestation of student's self. If the teaching is an anabolic act of breaking down a number of raw data to form an amalgamated idea, the student's learning is a catabolic deed of reconstructing the idea into an understanding. While knowledge sails through one being into another seamlessly,

37 Alfred North White Head, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*. New York: Macmillan Company, 1929. Based on the 1927–28 Gifford Lectures delivered at the University of Edinburgh. The 1978 Free Press 'corrected edition' edited by David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne corrects many errors in both the British and American editions, and also provides a comprehensive index. August 01, 2016.

innumerable individuals (through their materials) coalesce into an amalgamated conduit to make it happen.

If we look at the act in its larger spectrum, we find that a chain of metabolic relationships unfolds between individuals. The above stated farmer and teacher come into a metabolic relation, with the former playing catabolic role and the latter does anabolic act. Similarly, the farmer, teacher and student represent two intersecting cycles of metabolic engagement with the teacher at the intersection.

Whitehead argues, a simple concrete object or a substance is an entity which, in this ontology, is "considered to be a temporally serial composite of indefinitely many overlapping occasions of experience. A human being is thus composed of indefinitely many occasions of experience,"[38] each representing innumerable humans and their manifest products. In other words, an individual is a realization occasioned by the realization of innumerable lives.

Life is experiential, not material. Whitehead calls it simply another abstraction (mental conception of the material 'occasions of experience').[39] Thereby he builds an amalgamated individual self out of the duality of mind and matter, yet distinctly different from its constituents. Because innumerable material occasions together constitute life, in the life of individual, even temporal performances (acts such as eating, teaching) are essentially 'realization of the larger Self' that is society. I am That; and 'that' is society. I and my society are one.

This analysis leads us to the realization that society is the functional form of self; like Spirkin says, s/he is the turbulent river her/himself.

2.3. Society as Exterior Self

Organic analysis of society helps us understand that society in the functional sense forms part of the human physical body. From the time of Aristotle, society has been seen as an extension of individual

38 Javier Monserrat, (2008), 830.
39 Ibid., 831.

being. Herbert Spenser calls society as a super organism.[40] Robert K Merton and other functionalists viewed society as an organism with various parts, and each part has a function to perform.[41]

The internal and external organs of human body give humans their biological existence. The present human life is an experience far beyond 'biological' scope. Humanity in its endeavor to better the prospect of life has evolved society to function as a third set of organs that can be termed as 'exterior' organs of human body. They perform much similar tasks as the internal and external organs do, as well as complement their work, to make life a sociological wonder. Devoid of the exterior organs, the combination of internal and external organs would at best give humans only a biological / animal life.

Thanks to this tri-somatic endeavor, even an ordinary human presently is blessed with extra-human experience. Today we can see from where we are the other side of the earth, hear from a person on the other pole, can run ten times faster, fly indeed faster than any bird. We lead a superhuman life even on an uneventful day. They are made possible by these third set of organs we humans have added to our somatic self.

In this sense, the transport system that enables individual to run ten times faster is one's exterior leg. The driver, the cleaner, the mechanic and the innumerable people associated with the chain of process called 'transport' together constitute *my* exterior leg. The workers who help us carry our luggage are the exterior hands; today one can lift 50 tons effortlessly, all one has to do is to call for an earth mover (a manifest of million hands). The sanitation workers who handle the city's garbage and clean its gutter lines thereby keep the toxicity low in the city, are the exterior renal system. The Police and defense function as exterior WBC (white blood corpuscle); the truck and goods transporters are the exterior bloodline by virtue of carrying food from the source to individual. We have exterior eyes and ears (media), exterior nervous

40 Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1898). Vol. 1. 5/1/2016. http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/2642 # Spencer _1650-01_1099 part II Ch.II, accessed on June 21, 2016.

41 http://study.com/academy/lesson/robert-k-merton-theories-and-functionalism.html, accessed on June 21, 2016.

system (telecom, electricity), exterior brain (the writers, thinkers and teachers).

The peasant-plant combination is our exterior stomach that does phase-one of digestion (metabolizing raw elements into consumable food commodity) enabling the internal stomach to do the phase-two of digestion. By their purpose, phase-one is anabolic as much as phase two being catabolic. The two are inseparable combination of human metabolism, the very biochemical actualization of life, both biological and social life.

For every organ (be it internal or external) of an individual's body, there is a corresponding organ exterior to the body. They are fellow individuals, social groups, community and its systems. The society is a super organic being which flows into individual to reemerge in the form of his/her self, and its myriad manifest expressions. The exterior self works in tandem with the interior self and the result is a 'social wonder.'

As society steps into complement the individual body in executing essential acts to realize a life that is beyond the scope of the biological body of individual, we may deem society as the larger body of individual and to that extent, larger self of individual. I am That, and 'that' is society. I and my society are one.

Conclusion

Analysis of correlation between Individual and society establishes the primacy of individual on the one side and the paramount nature of society on the other. There is no society without individual, and no human life without society. Life is experienced at individual level in which society is regarded as an indispensable condition for individual to realize the self, as they are today. And their identities appear distinct. Organic analysis takes us beyond this correlation of distinct identities, to establish a coalesced oneness.

The analysis of 'self' brings out the fact that, 'society is the human being in his social relations, and every human being is an individual embodiment of social relations.' I am what my society is. The analysis

of economic fabric reveals that 'individual' is an expression of million hands. Individual is not single, s/he is a cluster within.

Social fabric analysis reveals that material substances (goods and services) are concrete expressions of 'occasions of experience' of its maker(s). It represents his/her self. In other words, the 'self' manifests in the form of commodity (goods and services).

In a transactional relationship, innumerable individuals through their services and goods (manifest self) "arise or coalesce" with individual in his/her becoming a human. This transactional relationship between individuals is one of metabolic; with the giver's act being anabolic and the receiver's catabolic, making it an organic experience. While life (and its realization) sails through one being into another seamlessly, innumerable individuals (through their materials) coalesce into an amalgamated conduit to make it happen.

Society functions as the exterior organ of individual. It works in tandem with the interior self. The result is a 'social wonder' that individual leads a superhuman life even on an uneventful day. Thus, when an individual acts, through the act s/he indeed manifests her 'mega self.' Individual is the manifestation of his/her society—the society that s/he is. I and my society are one.

Every individual, being a manifestation of seamless social relations, is a clustered organism. The individuality cannot blossom except in the form of society. Individual is the embodiment of society; rather an atomized society endowed with the capability of his/her society. S/he is the society oneself, not in the sense of a constituent member, but by virtue of manifesting the society in oneself. This thoroughly overlapping coalesced life makes the relationship between individual and society one of non-dualistic at the subtle level. As life comes to individual as a unique realization distinct from that of others, individual remains primary and thereby the relationship between individual and the society is dualistic at manifest level.

Part - III

Enriching Our National Home

NATION
as Our Home

READING GANDHI IN AMBEDKAR'S SHOES
Reclaiming Democracy

George Thadathil, sdb

Abstract: *The paper attempts a revaluation of the role of Gandhi in Indian society and nation-state formation. It is done through the critical lens of Ambedkar's open challenge to Gandhian vision for India's political independence without ensuring the social equality and freedom for all its citizens. In a caste-ridden India has the Gandhian promise for an egalitarian India as a result of the 'change of mentality' of the Caste Hindus arrived? In addressing the person and his strategies through Ambedkarian critique two objectives are intended: first, to lay bare the 'double standards' by which Gandhian integrity is challenged by Ambedkar, and second, to look afresh at the Ambedkarian rationale for finding fault with Gandhi and his logic of retaining the old and yet aspiring for something new. The paper assumes that the prevailing dominance of Gandhian scholarship, given his voluminous writings and the global image as a pacifist, prevented till recently any honest assessment and intellectual engagement with the Ambedkarian vision for modern India. This lacuna is something that scholars are beginning to acknowledge and the paper is an attempt along that line, and in the vein of Arundhati Roy's representative voice among the new generation of scholars, willing to unveil the myth around Gandhi as to see better the direction for a more democratic Indian future.*

* * * * * *

Ambedkar and Gandhi as individuals have led the communities of people they were concerned with is beyond doubt. Their initiatives

and interventions have brought about lasting impact in the society for which they felt responsible. However, the communities, in their turn, to what extent have been agents of transformation is a matter subject to exploration. Have the Ambedkarites, the Dalits, become agents of communal transformation themselves in terms of overcoming the 'burden of injustice' inflicted on them in the past, and are they ready to prevent or repair further the 'hurts' and 'injuries'? Are the inheritors and promoters of the Gandhian approach to re-visioning India and even the world, continuing to work towards overcoming the injustice of casteism in India, by granting equal status, by 'recognizing' and 'respecting' the other on equal footing? An exploration of this continued engagement with the concerns of Gandhi-Ambedkar debate on 'modernizing' Indian society might prove to be beneficial an underlying in revisiting their persons and histories. Even further, it might give hints as to how in any society where similar forms of 'non recognition' of the other and the resultant hurts searching for repair might stand to gain.

Neera Chandhoke has drawn attention to the fact that "the one vital good that redistributive justice tries to secure—recognition—continues to elude attempts at repair." She draws on empirical work on the practice of 'untouchability' done in 1969 by sociologist I.P. Desai in rural Gujarat, presenting the findings of his research project commenting that while "in pubic arenas governed by law, untouchability was the least practiced, when it came to the private sphere of personal transactions, matters were different. In the public sphere Dalits had come into their own as citizens of independent India. In the private sphere, the domain where social transactions not only foster friendship, companionship and intimacy, but also govern life chances, Dalits are still discriminated against." A repeat of a similar study among college students, thirty years down the line she says, showed 'the attitude of caste Hindus had not changed': "Dalit students and colleagues were not invited into homes of caste Hindus and were barred from worlds of friendship and familiarity." Not only, a research project of 2006 across 565 villages in 11 states across India showed the prevalence of atrocities against Dalits as a

continuing factor despite a stronger Dalit movement.[1] I want to carry further this submission of Chandhoke in this paper by looking for the source of the non-recognition of the other and the interest of the other in the history of 'modernizing India' as originating in the Father of the Nation, Gandhi. This will be visible if he is looked through the eyes of Ambedkar or read standing in Ambedkar's shoes.

The republication of the annotated and with an introduction by Arundhati Roy of Ambedkar's *Annihilation of Caste* (1936) opened up a discourse across the world: it is as if they—Ambedkar and Gandhi—are continuing to critique contemporary modern's conscience, when it comes to the aspirations and the realizations of being a modern democratic society committed to fraternity, equality and freedom. Many are the participants in this debate and I will draw on, not all but a few, significant studies in this line. My intent thereby are twofold: one, that may be a reappraisal of the vision Gandhi had for India is necessary to be true to the critical exegesis of his writings continuing to unfold, and secondly, that to do justice to his vision for a resurgent India an incorporation of what Ambedkar thought of him, ideologically and as a person, is a necessity.[2]

Concluding a long drawn out debate on the Ambedkar-Gandhi differences and possible areas of convergence on issues of conversion, untouchability, modernity and the future vision of an emergent India, Palshikar comments that

> if contemporary Gandhism fights shy of caste struggles, it has lost the core of Gandhi's discourse. The restrictive interpretation of Gandhi will have to be rejected in favour of a creative interpretation.

1 Madhura Swaminathan and Vikas Rawal, "Income Inequality in village India: The Role of Caste," Working Paper Series, ECINE Society for the study of Income Inequality, http://fas.org.in/wp-content/themes/zakat/pdf/ Publications/ ECINEQ2011-207.pdf

2 I had originally intended to end with the possibility of bringing in a third figure, Sri Narayana Guru, into the discourse in order to envision this future journey. However, due to the allowed length of the paper this will become a project in itself and another article to be presented at the Fifth Annual Conference of the Backwaters Collective: Metaphysics and Politics due to be held in Le Meridien, Cochin, 15-18 July 2016.

> Non-recognition of categories like *shudra-adishudra* does not form the core of Gandhism. In fact, use of a term like *daridranarayana* presupposes readiness to understand social reality on the basis of exploitative relations.[3]

Reading Gandhi in the shoes of Ambedkar is an attempt to evaluate the contributions of both towards emancipation of the untouchables/ dalits/tribals/women/children of this country and the reasons for the ideal and vision for making a modern democratic India still faltering. The debate itself has a definitive role in Indian society, in as much as the glorification of one leader/thinker against the other, the exclusion of one or the other from the scheme of affairs needs challenge. Given the diversity of India, envisaging the future calls for the acceptance and mutual critique of opposing ideological figures without negating the constituencies they stood for, until the eventual merging of differences and an ideal 'inclusive and democratic community' arrives on the scene. Wherever the force of the argument and the need of the time requires, the willingness to move away from platitudes and sanctimonious ascriptions to new conceptions and reworking the ideals of the founding fathers, in the most inclusive manner, alone can help attain all of their goals. In this vein, it is indeed true to say that our understanding of leading historic figures like "Gandhi or Nehru is bound to remain incomplete, both in the sense of biography and history, in the absence of the grasp of their relations with Ambedkar."[4]

1. Ambedkar Vs Gandhi

Gandhi's admiration for Ambedkar and his intellect is well documented, and his difference with Ambedkar is centred around the latter's insistence on seeking separate identity for the Untouchables. In the justification of that demand armed with the radical critique of Hinduism as a religion with a fatal flaw due to its blind justification of 'caste system,' which is for the advantage of the few and disadvantage of the many, prevented,

3 Suhash Palshikar, "Gandhi-Ambedkar Interface: ...When Shall the Twain Meet? *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 31, No. 31 (Aug. 3, 1996), 2070-72.

4 Upendra Baxi, "Justice as Emancipation: The Legacy of Babasaheb Ambedkar," quoted in Aakash Singh, "Gandhi and Ambedkar: Irreconcilable Differences?" *International Journal of Hindu Studies* Vol.18, No.3, (2014), 413-49.

he argued, the Indian society from ever becoming a modern nation-state based on the democratic premises of 'liberty, equality and fraternity.' Ambedkar's strong language in distancing himself from Gandhi, therefore, has on the one hand, a theologico-philosophical core, wherein Gandhi operates within the Dharmic sanatanist, eastern/indian worldview while Ambedkar is western/modern/rational in thinking, and on the other, a political core, wherein Gandhi wants to represent entire India and Ambedkar questioning that political assumption of his politically:

> I know Gandhi better than his disciples. They came to him as devotees and saw only the Mahatma. I was an opponent, and I saw the bare man in him. He showed me his fangs.... He was never a Mahatma. I refused to call him Mahatma...He doesn't deserve that title. Not even from the point of view of his morality.... In Gandhism, the common man has no hope.…Under Gandhism the common man must keep on toiling ceaselessly for a pittance and remain a brute. In short, Gandhism with its call of back to nature means back to nakedness, back to squalor, back to poverty and back to ignorance for the vast mass of the people.[5].... [He phrased it differently, but poignantly when he told Gandhi:] ...let there be no repetition of the old method when the reformer claimed to know more of the requirements of his victims than the victims themselves.[6]

In a way history has [at least thus far] favoured Gandhi and was not kind to Ambedkar. In having saved Gandhi's life for the 'nation,' probably fearing the backlash against his own people in case of Gandhi's death due to fast, having agreed to the Poona Pact he became embittered at the bio-politics Gandhi was engaging in as a strategy. Ambedkar's indignance towards Gandhi is based on his rational insight into the necessity of reforming Hinduism and the obstinacy of Gandhi in wanting to preserve Hinduism, with mere cosmetic changes, and to that too being not fully committed. He says: "If I am disgusted with Hindus and Hinduism, it is because I am convinced

5 Aakash Singh, "Gandhi and Ambedkar: Irreconcilable Difference?" *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 18, 3 (2014), 415–51.

6 Gandhi, "The Right Way and the Wrong Way," quoted in *Radical Equality*, ed., Aishwary Kumar, 277.

that they cherish wrong ideals and live a wrong social life. My quarrel with Hindus and Hinduism is not over the imperfections of their social conduct. It is much more fundamental. It is over their ideals."[7] The ongoing intellectual battle, ever since that submission, is to come back to the point of equal treatment that Ambedkar argued for, and it is in returning to—or as an attempt to reclaim—the progress towards equality that the debate itself, even as it is being re-visited by contemporary scholars is to be positioned, whether in the media, contemporary politics or academic discourses.

For a start, as to revisit the issue at hand, we could begin with what Ramachandra Guha summarizes:

> Gandhi wished to save Hinduism by abolishing untouchability, whereas Ambedkar saw a solution for his people outside the fold of the dominant religion of the Indian people. Gandhi was a rural romantic, who wished to make the self-governing village the bedrock of free India; Ambedkar an admirer of city life and modern technology who dismissed the Indian village as a den of iniquity. Gandhi was a crypto-anarchist who favoured non-violent protest while being suspicious of the state; Ambedkar a steadfast constitutionalist who worked within the state and sought solutions to social problems with the aid of the state.[8]

In this assessment of Guha on the first point of comparison, to be honest to Ambedkar's intelligence and rational assessment of the origin of the problem of untouchability and its decimation, if a logical action is to be sought for, it cannot but be seen as lying in infusing radical equality

7 BRA, AoC, ed., S. Anand, 353.

8 He continues, "Mahatma Gandhi was not so much the Father of the Nation as the mother of all debates regarding its future. All his life he fought in a friendly spirit with compatriots whose views on this or that topic diverged sharply from his. He disagreed with Communists and bhadraloks on the efficacy and morality of violence as a political strategy. He fought with radical Muslims on the one side and with radical Hindus on the other, both of whom sought to build a state on theological principles. He argued with Nehru and other scientists on whether economic development in a free India should centre on the village or the factory. And with that other giant, Rabindranath Tagore, he disputed the merits of such varied affiliations as the English language, nationalism, and the spinning wheel." Ramachandra Guha, "Gandhi and Ambedkar: Heroes in Their Own Right" *The Indian Express*, July 24, '97.

into Indian society. Therefore, in the process, whatever is of Hinduism if it is known to subscribe untouchability is to be done away with and what promotes equality is to be accepted, if India wants to move forward as a 'democratic nation' is Ambedkar's core argument, and not simply as Guha seems to give the impression in his assessment and summation—of the untouchables as a group, wanting to leave Hindu fold. As for his final comment on the constitutionalism introduced by Ambedkar for preservation of state, it is to be noted, as scholars have shown that he also said that he was ready to burn it, and that is a strong indictment of constitutionalism itself. What he aspires is the vigilant rational critique of a people to constantly keep alive equal respect for its citizens.

Akash Singh, in his attempt to summarize the various attempts at reconciliation, takes into consideration Thomas Pantham, Partha Chatterjee and Guha, and sees in Pantham the greatest homogeneity premise built around what Palshikar had proposed as their fundamental orientation to emancipation, though in different modes. He identifies a historical reconciliation streak in Pantham as that of a contemporaneous reconciliation attempt by Guha and a futuristic projection of this reconciliation as that which should engage us with both of them, as premised by Palshikar and nuanced in both homogenous and heterogeneous conflation of theory and practice by Partha. These reconciliation attempts by neither are fully accepted by Singh for two reasons: first, for the fact that Gandhi remained attached to the *varna* system undisputedly, the homogeneity of purpose or aim, as made by Pantham, falls apart because Ambedkar's aim was to do away with caste itself and not merely untouchability and its stigma (though Gandhi believed that minus untouchability, *varna* would become bearable) and as for the historicization argument of trying to reconcile them in the present for our national goal, the distancing act is a privileging of a particular viewpoint nonetheless, and does probable violence to the cause of the marginalized; the second, that while Gandhi was a rural romanticist, Ambedkar was a thoroughgoing enlightenment modernist is an issue over which they continue to remain as irreconcilable then as of now. He tries to substantiate his case by drawing on key pronouncements and statements on either side.

Taking Pantham's case to be the most compelling it is summed up by Aakash Singh by quoting him as follows:

> Gandhi seems to me to have been appreciative of the fact that Ambedkar's emancipatory approach...was, in a broad sense, compatible with, if not complementary to, his own approach... Hence, we may conclude that Gandhi and Ambedkar made, sometimes together and sometimes separately, truly pioneering contributions to a mass political movement for an as yet incomplete multifaceted programme for human freedom from untouchability...Recognizing the compatibility if not a mutual supplementarity between their emancipatory legacies in the religious and political spheres may perhaps be needed today for a cooperative movement against untouchability.[9]

However, Singh is unable to see a possible reconciliation, despite the desirable and tedious efforts by others, due to what he poses as the defining questions concerning the common goal of emancipation—*'from what'* and *'into what'*—as being radically different for both Gandhi and Ambedkar, given their life positions and ideological/ religious choices. The need of the debate is not to diminish the contribution of Gandhi, rather to highlight the vision and stature of Ambedkar and the manner in which Gandhi failed or succeeded to do justice to Ambedkar and not only to his constituency as a political group, but his vision of India as a politically robust space. This intellectual, philosophical history of working for an egalitarian society needs to be revisited if one is an authentic Gandhian "in experiment with Truth."[10] An exercise of this nature will probably take us to the root of the lack of recognition of the other, that we began with.

Whether the adamant stand of Ambedkar came to change Gandhi, which is a position that Pantham and Coward takes, and noting that it should be measured by what Ambedkar thought about it, having outlived Gandhi, Aakash goes on to say that most Gandhians have

9 Thomas Pantham, "Against Untouchability: The Discourses of Gandhi and Ambedkar," in *Humiliation: Claims and Context*, ed., Gopal Guru (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009), 179-208; Aakash Singh, *op. cit*., 435.

10 In reconciling, without favouring one or negating the other, he proposes to place them in a constellation, as to carry forward the creative dialogicality that is required in order to fully understand either of them, for the good of the nation in the making of India and beyond.

come over to the side of Ambedkar in undoing untouchability and granting equality of status that is substantive and therefore the issue should be rested.[11] However, if the differences are irreconcilable, this submission, on his part is too quick and one could have a legitimate grouse on this claim and as to how we measure the same, if the premise that the non-equal treatment of the Dalits is a continued fact in Indian society. Are we talking of theoretical non-objection with an actual condoning of the contrary? This is what brings us to Arundhati Roy, carrying forward the earlier submission made by Neera Chandhoke. The critique to Gandhi that Arundhati Roy, taking on the debate headlong in her *'Saint and the Doctor'* exposes, as a keen activist-journalist and research-academic, is the dark and shadow side of Gandhi, as if to sift through the foliage of fame built around Gandhi, in a deconstructive manner as to see him through the Ambedkarian eyes.

2. Gandhian Integrity

The attempt to read Gandhi from an Ambedkarian angle of vision shall be restricted to the issue of 'sincerity' and 'integrity' for which a Gandhian scholar like Akeel Bilgrami would offer philosophical justification.[12] In contrast Roy looks to what Ambedkar does to demolish the 'aura of sanctity' and moral superiority around Gandhi by quoting Gandhi to show how he is insincere and thus not honest to the Truth he wants to uphold as God. This is done by showing the 'numerous examples in Gandhi's writings and speeches wherein he *simultaneously* speaks of the abhorrence of untouchability, the equality of all, the freedom for all to pursue their hobbies or interests whatever their caste and class, and the mandate that a person's livelihood ought *nevertheless* be dictated by that of his forefathers.'[13] For Ambedkar, to be sure, equality did not mean mere equality of or within *varna*s, but truly substantial political, social, and material economic equality across classes and castes. Though she addresses

11 Akash Singh, op cit.

12 Akeel Bilgrami, "Gandhi's integrity," *Raritan*. New Brunswick, Vol. 21, 2 (Fall 2001), 48- 21.

13 Arundhati Roy, *Doctor and the Saint: Introduction to Annihilation of Caste*, op cit.

the political, social and the moral realms of conflict, it is the latter that she exposes most abrasively. She attempts to deconstruct Gandhi in order to see what Ambedkar was saying and thinks there is hope for equality, 'not until we rearrange the stars in our firmament.' In other words, she is critiquing

> the way establishment historisation sanitizes the past and retrieves only that which is comfortable; that Gandhi despite the accusation and his own avowal that only small minds are consistent, has been consistent on issues of labour, caste, women. To have excised Ambedkar from Gandhi's story, which is the story we all grew up on, is a travesty. Equally, to ignore Gandhi while writing about Ambedkar is to do Ambedkar a disservice, because Gandhi loomed over Ambedkar's world in myriad and un-wonderful ways.[14]

Roy, having presented the relevance of reading Ambedkar against the issue of persisting discrimination even in a seventy year old democracy, India, says that the two, Gandhi and Ambedkar, are and continue to be irreconcilable.

The point about Gandhi being consistent (on core issues unlike the other issue of inconsistency in speaking differently different times) is taken up by Arundhati Roy when she describes a little-known side of Gandhi about how his disturbing views on race during his years in South Africa presaged his public pronouncements on caste.[15] As she puts it: "Ambedkar was Gandhi's most formidable adversary. He challenged him not just politically or intellectually, but also morally. He cast not only aspersions, but seemed to expose pointedly the insincerity behind his posturing to be saviour of the untouchables."[16] This prevarication and 'casuistry' of explaining the same thing in minute or nuanced ways on different occasions as pointed out by M.N. Roy, even while Gandhi was alive, is explained by him as the result of 'neurosis' which for him

14 B.R. Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste*, S. Anand (ed), with Annotations (Delhi, Navayana, 2014), Editor's Note, p.13; "Introduction," *Doctor and the Saint*, 39.

15 Cf., G B Singh, *Gandhi: Behind the Mask of Divinity*, (New York, Prometheus Books, 2004). He objects to the African American espousal of Gandhi, when the latter was anti African in his South African career, and by self admission, a point that Roy too highlights.

16 Arundhati Roy, *Doctor and the Saint*, op.cit.

is the 'psychological foundation of demonstrative saintliness.'[17] M.N. Roy highlighted the authoritarian streak in Gandhian politics of the day, and linked it with fascist tendencies usurping its head that time despite the aura of non-violence.[18]

Akeel Bilgrami, not denying the problem with reading Gandhi and his oft repeated but with additional nuances the same concept and thus difficult to interpret, yet again asserts that Gandhi had a logic in him and a consistency which he terms his 'integrity.' Akeel builds this interpretation on the analysis of the notion of 'non violence' in Gandhi as based on his understanding of the moral principle of not hurting another as going to the extent of not even thinking ill or lending to criticism of another, in which lies the root cause of violence in as much as therein is sown the seed of discontent exposing the inability to truly understand the other. The non-violence which he applies on the British as intended to be outside the legal, constitutional framework of demands placed on the British up till the arrival of Gandhi on the scene and as Gandhi's initiation of an alternative to the western paradigm of goodness (enshrined in the constitutionalism and to which the earlier nationalists had succumbed) itself as being the integrity he unveils, in challenging the European moral framework, of 'acting so as to make of your action a principle' as made famous by Kant and introducing the Gandhian way of 'so acting as to make of yourself an exemplar.'[19]

Though this nuanced critique offers a good alternate epistemological thought-frame on ethics and morality, however, does not exonerate Gandhi because in his conceptualization of the 'exemplar,' the Dalit or the untouchable is not his own self. Because, if that were so, he would not have resisted Ambedkar and his vision of truth and pathway to justice in a society that had denied justice to his people, and not have

17 M.N. Roy, *Problem of Freedom* (Kolkata: Renaissance Publishers, 2006), 10. "It is an observed psychological phenomenon that neurotic persons, even if they are subjectively sincere, are often driven unconsciously by motives which are contradictory to what they believe to be their motives; they attempt to harmonize the contradictions of their own feelings, their emotional conflicts, by ideological constructions or fallacious moralizings without ever doubting their moral integrity."

18 Ibid., 26.

19 Akeel Bilgrami, *op.cit*.

stood on their way of redressing it, and making thereby the society more equal. Gandhi, in other words is criticizing or leveling the very criticism he says should not be there in the *ahimsa* practitioner, in not understanding or sympathizing or upholding the vision of Ambedkar, of a casteless India. Thus, the Ambedkarian criticism of Gandhi holds good that he is not sincere—that he does not walk the talk. In other words, Bilgrami does not succeed to take the wind out of the sail of Ambedkar's critique of Gandhi with his argument of *ahimsa* being rooted in 'non-criticism.'

3. Did Gandhi Do Justice to Ambedkar

Asha Krishan's study on the 'Gandhi-Ambedkar' phenomenon comes to state that the final two decisions of Ambedkar's indicate how far he had been influenced by Gandhi: first in his formation of the new political party—the National Republican Party, aimed at 'a larger constituency, namely, the scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the Backward Classes together constituting over 30% of India's population' and second by 'registering the protest of the scheduled castes against the treatment meted out to them under Hinduism by conversion to Buddhism,' thus fulfilling his words at Yeola, "I will not die in the Hindu religion." She says that Ambedkar's conduct here smacks of Gandhian tactics where 'protest against injustice is lodged but good relations maintained with the opposite side.'[20]

Most assessors of their unique roles do grant that the combined roles of both Gandhi and Ambedkar made India make sweeping progress, or at least lay the foundations of a successful democracy in intent and practice. "If Mahatma Gandhi gave a moral purpose and mass dimension to our freedom movement, Dr Ambedkar gave it a profound social content and a challenging vision of a democratic and egalitarian social order. Both put the suffering common man at the centre stage of our struggle for independence and the national reconstruction process."[21]

20 Asha Krishan, *Ambedkar and Gandhi: Emancipators of Untouchables in Modern India*, (Mumbai: Himalaya Publishing House, 1997), 194-96. She sees it this way because the Constitution's explanation II to article 25(2) enables the Buddhists to be part of Hinduism and this, she says, is a 'tribute to Gandhi' by Ambedkar.

21 K.R. Narayanan, "Message" in *Mahatma Gandhi and Babasaheb Ambedkar: Crusaders against Caste and Untouchability*, ed., S.N. Busi (Hyderabad: Saroja Publications, 1997), iii.

The latter claim becomes difficult to substantiate when placed against the record of anti-African sentiments and action in Africa and in the reduction of caste and its evils purely to Untouchability and within it purely to the work of the Bhangi's is the reading of Arundhati Roy.

Ambedkar did not believe in a *Swaraj* (freedom) without sharing of power between the Dalits and Hindus, because or else he knew that it would merely be a matter of change of power/masters and the ground reality would continue. His prediction is in fact being borne out even today is what S.N. Busi is establishing in his study of both and the continued vigilance that is called for especially on the part of the bureaucracy to ensure the implementation of their joined vision of a resurgent India. An Ambedkarian reading of Gandhi would thus result in being able to imbue a materiality to the spiritual goals of transformation of the self that Gandhi envisaged, be it of the dominant or the dominated among the Indian people.[22]

Reading Gandhi in the shoes of Ambedkar can historically be accomplished by a simple revisit of the book, *What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables* published in 1945, and coming after years of having lived with the consequences of the submission to Poona Pact and having composed his classic, *Annihilation of Caste* in 1936.[23] There is a list of grievances that Ambedkar raises on behalf of his people which in today's hindsight and scholarship on Gandhi surprises as to why Gandhi did not set aside the resources he had raised, 1.25 crores, for the untouchability abolition; why he did not encourage the depressed classes when they took to *satyagraha* to open up the public spaces and end the discrimination and thus rectify the Hindu society from within; and in all this he drives home at the duplicity, or lack of sincerity in Gandhi. He sets up 14 questions to be answered by Gandhi or Gandhi-friends, as to the sincerity of Gandhi, on behalf of the caste Hindus, in wanting to redress the evil

22 Ibid., xv-xxiv

23 B. R. Ambedkar, *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untourchables* (Bombay: Thacker and Co., 1945). It was dedicated to certain F. with whom he shares the interpretation of the story of Ruth by W. Smith and recalls how it was the inspiration behind the book, the sociological understanding of a biblical passage about 'your people are my people.'

of untouchability in India. Therefore, it would be interesting to follow or find out, in the process of reading Gandhi in Ambedkar's shoes, as to how many have replied to these objections.[24]

He raises the issue of Gandhi recognizing on the one hand, only the depressed classes as the minority in India, not being able to fend for themselves in an independent India (unlike Muslim, Sikhs, or Indian Christians) and at the same time denying them the political right to safeguard themselves, and in this way he again exposes Gandhi's insincerity. One would have to argue on the other hand that Gandhi's sincerity is judged within his self-understanding and that he regarding himself as Indian/Hindu sees the necessity of the Hindu India's continuity as the truth to which he wants to owe allegiance and therefore, in the same breath, embraces Dalits from being excluded as a minority and at the same time excludes as not deserving of separate electorate, and yet, in his own way, as Ambedkar says, gets away with it. He also points out how in the Round Table Conference he coaxed the Muslims (Jinnah) to have their 14 points granted against the withdrawal of support to the 14 points of the Depressed Class (represented by Ambedkar).[25] His scathing and yet pointedly argumentative, rational, logical exposition is unbeatable in the way he shows how, let alone being a friend or an ally for the cause of Dalit upliftment, Gandhi turned out to be an enemy of the untouchable's cause of emancipation.[26]

One argument in particular which Ambedkar shows to reveal the 'fangs' as it were of Gandhi is telling: The *Harijan Sevak Sangh* set up by Gandhi was, Ambedkar argues, in fact for destroying the independence and self respect the movement of the Depressed Classes had come to attain by then, i.e., the Round Table Conference (1931-32), under his leadership. He comes to the above conclusion after arriving at the real reasons why Gandhi did not allow the Dalits who asked to be the office bearers in the Sangh, to do so: first, for the reason that "Harijan Sevak Sangh is an act of penance on the part of

24 B. R. Ambedkar, *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables*, 262-65.

25 Ibid., 269.

26 Ibid., 272.

the Hindus for the sin of observing Untouchability" and therefore its "they who must do the penance" leaving no room for Dalits having any place in it, and secondly Gandhi says, "the money collected by him is given by the Hindus and not by the Untouchables and as the money is not of the untouchables, they can have no right to be on the governing body."[27] Ambedkar's response is telling: "if meanness is a virtue then Mr Gandhi's logic is superb and Mr Gandhi is welcome to the benefit of it;" and goes on:

> these however could not be real reasons for not allowing the Untouchables to run the Sangh. The real reasons are: ...first if the Sangh were to be handed over to the Untouchables, Mr Gandhi and Congress will have no means of control over the Untouchables. The Untouchables will cease to be dependent on the Hindus. In the second place, the Untouchables having become independent will cease to be grateful to the Hindus. This in turn would be against the objectives for which Gandhi had begun the Sangh.[28]

Somewhere little later, he compares the response of Lincoln to the question of Union preservation and the slavery issue, and highlights that for the former, Union was the more important irrespective of freedom of slaves and if it had to be granted to all, or some, he was willing and wanting to do that for the sake of Union, whereas Gandhi, placed in a similar situation, did not want the liberation of untouchables, even if *Swaraj* did not come through[29] and one could ask as to who are the modern Gandhians in this respect: could they be the other Sangh (RSS), that wants Hindu *rashtra* reinstated *en masse* at the cost of minorities and Dalits alike? Or all those who dare not own up the critique that Ambedkar is making against Gandhi, and his ideological inheritors? In response to those who say that after the Poona pact Gandhi was different, he shows how in 1940 when the issue of compliance to the self-rule and constitutional acceptance being got from all groups including untouchables by Linlithgow the viceroy, Gandhi did not want a separate representation for Dalits apart from the congress: and therefore, one can only be "beware of Mr Gandhi" is where he ends the chapter.

27 Ibid., 28-81.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., 282.

The following Chapter, "Gandhism" has this to say: "notwithstanding my exposure of Mr Gandhi, Gandhists might take advantage of it and continue to preach that if Mr Gandhi has failed to solve the problem of the Untouchables still the Untouchables will find their salvation in Gandhism."[30] He quotes extensively in translation Gandhi's views on Caste and how in two years from 1921-22 to 1925 it changed apparently, from an approval to a conditional approval, which again in his rebuttal of Gandhi's response to his *Annihilation of Caste* he shows as nothing more than play on words, confounding the ordinary people, in simply holding on to *varna* by rejecting caste and upholding ancestral occupations, which is nothing but caste pure and simple.[31] He also shows how the Gandhism being admired by many is simplistic unless backed by solid economic and political power backing the weak in society. This is the crux of Ambedkarian reading and critique of Gandhi. In terms of the struggles for equality by peoples all over the world, and even the Black Lives do Matter movement in US, the radical equality is arrived at only when power sharing is achieved on equal footing, is being proved right.[32] Gandhism originates from his fundamental belief that "western civilization is the creation of satan"[33] and point out that "Gandhism can be well suited only to a society which does not accept democracy as its ideal. A society which does not believe in democracy may be indifferent to machinery and the civilization based upon it. But a democratic society cannot."[34] After exposing the flaws in the views of Gandhian reformative plan as puerile and insincere, (a point that Roy highlights by showing

30 Ibid., 286. This is indeed a perceptive and prescient statement of Ambedkar considering how his original views have been camouflaged, distorted and outright rejected, and continues to be sidelined.

31 Caste as *Jati* and *Varna* as the ideal of differential occupations, applicable in one form or the other in all societies is what he apparently says, but in as much as he does not thereby encourage intermarriage, inter-dining and cessation of ancestral professional continuity, it amounts to no difference whether one or the other word is used, is what Ambedkar exposes.

32 Eddie S. Claude, *Democracy in Black: How Race still Enslaves the American Soul*, (Princeton: March 2016). http://www.labyrinthbooks.com/events_detail.aspx?evtid=866.

33 BRA, WCGU, 200 (a counter view probably to what he heard as an youngster in England from the churches that Hinduism is the work of devil).

34 Ibid., 295.

how the big business of Birla sustained Gandhi's poverty image) he ends the chapter saying his shift from caste to *varna* is 'simply a new name' retaining all the worst features of the caste system. There is no Gandhism without caste as he has nowhere condemned it as 'evil' or 'anathema,' but merely that it is an anachronism—as he himself is turning out to be from a wave of new researches.

4. Whither Indian 'Fathers' in the Global World?

What is the crux of the attempt at reading Gandhi in Ambedkar's shoes? Is not sufficient written about Gandhi, with the tomes he has himself given to writing and collected in 98 volumes numbering 48000 pages and having the halo of the saint entrenched in the global mind as it were? The crux is in the critique of Caste Ambedkar made in his *Annihilation of Caste* and partly in *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to Untouchables*, by arguing that if a modern India is to be created one needs to do away with caste. Because without that premise, "The question whether the Congress is fighting for freedom has very little importance as compared to the question for whose freedom is the Congress fighting."[35] Similarly, in today's context, the BJP fighting for a global position for India, again comes back to the question as to for whom is the India shining? The land of Gandhi and Ambedkar could truly offer the world a possible direction for the 'recognition' of the least and move towards a modernity that attains substantive equality for all, and then it would truly be a shining example.

Some see a possible merger of the two visions in the way: Gandhi aspired Congress to be dissolved on attaining independence and in his belief that state endorsed violence could never promote the true freedom that Swaraj stood for. It is this true freedom that the Indian Constitution of Ambedkar is envisaged to establish in the extent possible in the now and an ever expanding possibility for all people, inclusive of those even he felt excluded. In this dual project carrying forward their legacy, despite the continued strain, that the generations to come can honestly attempt to create an egalitarian state to back a single nation 'India the *Bharat.*' When his last attempt to envision an egalitarian Hindu society modeled on his reformative 'Hindu code

35 Ibid., 43.

bill' failed to be passed, he resigned as law minister with these words: "to leave inequality between class and class, between sex and sex, which is the soul of Hindu society, and to go on passing legislation relating to economic problems is to make a farce of our constitution and to build a palace on a dung heap." [36]

The contradictions between them, remaining irreducible, are not only in terms of what they saw as negative in each other, but the very opposition of their respective positions contemporaneously. On the one hand the utopia of Gandhi's dream that the land of Caste Hinduism would shelve untouchability and bring about equality not having materialized, and on the other, the rural village which Ambedkar despised and his dream of modern cities of technology and progress as that which is being seen the world over as the impediment to the preservation of the ecological justice, and thus taking its turn back to the ideal village of sustainable living preached by Gandhi, sans its caste inequalities, shows the way the two personalities and their visions continue to collide and collude.[37]

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36 Rege Sharmila, *Against the Madness of Manu: BR Ambedkar's Writings on Brahminical Patriarchy* (New Delhi: Navayana, 2013), 241, as quoted in Arundhati Roy, "Introduction," *Doctor and Saint*, in BR Ambedkar, *The Annihilation of Caste* with annotations by S. Anand (New Delhi: Navayana, 2014), 46. The Gandhian project of gaining independence by undermining the very foundations of British colonial rule and gaining autonomy for the Indian civilization to move forward by taking in from elsewhere what is necessary and good is something yet to be achieved. Would the demise of Congress or the ascendancy of BJP and Hindutva nationalism have accomplished this for now? This is where the critique of Roy to both the narrow nationalism of the right wing represented in Modi, and the crass capitalism which he and the industrial elite espouse, is being addressed.

37 Bidyut Chakraborty, *Social and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 15. Bidyut Chakraborty categorizes Gandhian literature into three types: biographical, philosophical-socio-political and those on the role of Gandhi in Freedom struggle. Probably there is a fourth category that is contemporarily emerging and can be called the Critique of Gandhi. Of course there is always the possibility of dividing his literature into different chronological phases of his life and that of the country. He looks at Gandhi as a civilizational character who offers one way to cope with colonialism and its aftermath, especially for the colonized societies, taking into account importance of tradition (including its critique) and also the autonomy of individuals—he combines the insights of different traditions to develop an ecumenical view of the world offering an alternative vision of universalism to the post-enlightenment ethnocentric model of colonial rulers.

The British/European civilization succeeded because its hegemonic representation was accepted by the masses. Its downfall or obliteration is possible only in reestablishing a hegemony of the autonomous in the shape of the return of Brahmanism (as Ambedkar interpreted Hinduism) or in the constitutional vision of secularism with the incorporation of every minority into the contemporary debate. The ideal of freedom is *Swaraj*—total autonomy—an utopia. The means to it as shown by Gandhi, is *Satyagraha* (a combination of *ahimsa* and truth): it is non violence to the opponent but self inflicted violence to prove the alterity to the opponent. Ambedkar's critique is vindicated in the non-egalitarian application of the implications of the self-violence as opposed to violence on another. His accusation is that the consequent suffering implied in the practice of ahimsa and *satyagraha* for the political goal of preserving the Indian cultural autonomy and civilizational legacy are imposed or relegated onto the Dalits non-consultatively and against their will. In other words, Ambedkar is questioning the very Gandhian claim to be the initiator of an anti-colonial legacy with his admiration for the pre-modern Hinduism on the one hand, and the inherent inability of an unreformed modern Hinduism to arrive anywhere close to egalitarianism and thus challenging the very status of Gandhi as the 'father of the nation'.[38]

38 Tabish Khair, "India 2015: Magic, Modi and Arundhati Roy," *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* Vol. 50(3), (2015), 398–406. (Downloaded from jcl.sagepub.com at Princeton Univ Library on February 8, 2016). Tabiz Khair of Aarhus, Denmark, recently responded to the response Roy has been getting internationally with what Modi is getting and comparing it with the approach that Gandhi had in speaking to the masses, who aspired for something new and similarly, the taluk-town based sub-subalterns aspiring for the metropolis symbolizes a language which Modi has captured and has thus nuanced the hardcore objections against capitalism or casteism that Roy by upholding Ambedkar and his rationalism is able to bring to the fore. This communication strategy failure or success to what extent is behind the envisaging of a future for a people and world, and how far the camouflaging of the very truth that Gandhi himself represented, is a matter of careful discernment. Khair seems to make the point that the oscillations of the posturing in the incoherently compromising statements on caste that Gandhi makes is to be justified within two perspectives: first, that mobility within the caste system is allowed and possible without challenging the overall scheme, and secondly, that his concern was to reach out to the masses and carry along everyone, rather than be revolutionarily anti-casteist as Roy wants him to be. In doing so one's clientele shrinks and that is what is happening contemporarily to Roy, as it happened to Ambedkar then, is his basic submission.

As a response to the legacy of post-Gandhian attempts to redress the caste grievances and its gaping failure, Balmurli Natrajan, in his assessment of the attempts by the postcolonial contemporary cultural elites to whitewash casteism by decimating its existence through varied arguments from the economic to the political assertion speaks sharply for the need to revive critical anti-casteism:

> If caste is indeed fundamentally about notions, attitudes, practices, relations and systems built around 'difference' (rather than hierarchy as ordered difference or rank), then it is useful to note that 'difference' too can be as problematic as hierarchy for any egalitarian politics. For it is possible to show that there exists a 'neo-casteism' built upon a set of practices and attitudes around perceived 'difference.' Thus, on the one hand, casteism could be a kind of *heterophobia*—a psycho-social fear of difference—which in turn could take on different forms such as seeking the annihilation of the bodies that embody that difference (physical genocide, ethnic cleansing), a quasi-permanent social separation or apartheid of the 'different' bodies (close approximation of the traditional caste system with graded inequality and separation), or a forced assimilation of that difference (cultural genocide, monoculturalism). We can note here that while the first and second forms keep intact an aversion to 'mixing' the last mentioned strips the cultural Other of its purported otherness or difference in order to assimilate, usually in a hierarchized manner.[39]

He ends his study on the Kumhar caste in Chattisgarh and the resurgence of caste as a modern feature in globalizing world as part of India's multicultural identity by arguing that the reversal to Ambedkarian argument for the annihilation of caste alone can save democracy in India, or keep semblance of equality in the Indian subcontinent alive.[40]

39 Balmurli Natrajan, *The Culturalization of Caste in India: Identity and inequality in a Multicultural Age* (New York: Routledge, 2012), xvi.

40 Ambedkar, "Conditions Precedent for the Successful Working of Modern Democracy," Pune, 22 December 1952, in 301 Seminal Speeches 1:287 quoted in Aishwary Kumar, *Radical Equality: Ambedkar, Gandhi, and the Risk of Democracy*, (California: Stanford University Press, 2015), 7. What is at stake in reading Gandhi and Ambedkar together, a process probably from now on will become a necessity, going by the power of the critique Ambedkar's *Annihilation of*

Conclusion

The sum of our description thus far is that Gandhi's integrity gets a challenge in the light of the reappraisals of his life and works, especially with regard to his stand towards Africans in Africa as he wields his weapon of *satyagraha* and that he has not been unequivocally committed to the cause of upliftment of the untouchables, as exposed by Ambedkar, in his works the *Annihilation of Caste* and *What Gandhi and the Congress Have Done to the Untouchables*. It is in the light of this equivocation on the part of Gandhi that we come to conclude, even as M.N. Roy, his contemporary and Arundhati Roy of present generation critical voice have shown that an uncritical subservience to Gandhi's aura is not going to take us into the future and instead, we need to take on the one true argumentative Indian, Ambedkar and his critique of tradition seriously, in order to move forward.

Ananya Vajpeyi ends the preface to her study entitled *'Righteous Republic'* by referring to MacIntyre stating that 'every tradition that lives a long and robust life must at some point face an epistemological crisis' and that there can be three following responses in such an event:

> first, a tradition can fail to resolve its crisis, and more or less come to an end, and she gives the example of Sanskrit knowledge in India as an example; second, a tradition can recognize its own crisis, but not be able to change itself enough to save itself, and so it can accept the superiority of another tradition, take that other tradition into itself, and carry on', and she compares this to what has happened to Indian Science, and third, 'a tradition can resolve its own crisis by itself, using its internal resources, reconsidering its own neglected aspects, overcoming its own contradictions, eliminating its own weaknesses, refreshing itself by critically recombining elements from within and without. This is what happened [and hopefully need to continue] to India's political tradition.[41]

Caste generates is that they engage with the issue of erecting an egalitarian society, a democracy in its true sense in a society that has been civilizationally not attuned to such a mode of existence. In fact Ambedkar defined democracy as "a form and a method of Government whereby revolutionary changes in the economic and social life of the people are brought about without bloodshed."

41 Ananya Vajpeyi, *Righteous Republic: The Political Foundations of Modern India*,

Reading Gandhi through Amedkar's perspectival lens has been definitely not an exercise in confirming the *mahatmahood* of Gandhi. Rather an exercise in seeing how the vision for a resurgent India requires not only the uniquely original strategies he followed in order to mobilize the masses, confront the imperialists, contain the varied ideological factions, but also an acceptance of the hard reality of the free India's present status against the warning and the probable solutions that Ambedkar had given, and not always and only from western sources,[42] for achieving radical equality. When these towering personalities are seen in constellation and not opposition shall the truly resurgent India, give its share to the global recovery. Both (Gandhi and Ambedkar) put the suffering common man at the centre stage of our struggle for independence and the national reconstruction process.

(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), xxiii-iv.

42 During the 3 October 1954 All India Radio broadcast, Ambedkar declared: 'My social philosophy may be said to be enshrined in three words: liberty, equality and fraternity; let no one however say that I borrowed my philosophy from the French Revolution. I have not. My philosophy has roots in religion and not in political science.' Quoted in Anup Dhar, "What if One Is Always Already Included?" *Seminar 674 State of Democracy*, (October 2015), 48.

AMBEDKAR AND GANDHI
SOCIAL TRANSFORMERS IN CONTRAST
Their Contributions in the Making of Modern India

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Abstract: *In this paper our endeavour is to highlight the contrasting personalities of Gandhi and Ambedkar, who have contributed enormously to the liberation and growth of India as an independent nation. While Gandhi was directly concerned with the political liberation of India, indirectly he was also involved in ameliorating the living conditions of the untouchables, whom he called 'Harijans.' But Ambedkar himself being an untouchable knew firsthand the horrible discrimination and oppression the untouchables (who are called Dalits today) were going through. He was lucky enough to attain liberation due to the higher education he received in the USA and England; but this personal liberation led him to fight for the liberation of his people almost to the status of being a revolutionary. He wanted that the caste system be annihilated; while Gandhi was more for adjustment and reconciliation. Ambedkar had the courage to oppose Gandhi and expose his pretensions and that of the Congress Party. There is no doubt that Gandhi was a great leader with a massive following from all sections of the society, while Ambedkar's influence remained restricted to the oppressed people of India. He took up this task with full commitment, and exposed the hypocrisies of those who pretended to be leaders without total commitment to the cause of the liberation of Dalits. Ambedkar's great service to the nation consists in the framing of the constitution, perhaps, one of the best in the world. Since he was an outstanding leader with great intellectual acumen the high caste leaders of the Congress could not bypass him. His and his people's conversion to Buddhism became a challenge and a question mark*

to the caste-based Hinduism; he called the new religion "Neo-Buddhism." He tried to bring about the liberation of the oppressed classes through the implementation of the motto: 'Educate, Organize and Agitate.' He challenged everyone to respect human beings irrespective of their status or position in life. His challenge for revolution against the oppressive caste system is catching up, and we need to hope and hasten that the liberation he dreamed for would not be far away.

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1. Introduction

For some Ambedkar and Gandhi are diametrically opposed characters with different approaches to problems and concerns of the society. Although they worked together for the political liberation of India and for the installation of a government of the Indian people, their strategies and their goals seem to have been different. Ambedkar was basically a revolutionary because of the oppression he, as a person, went through and witnessed very emotionally what his own people, the Dalits, were undergoing; and therefore he coined the very famous slogan: "Educate, Organize and Agitate." Ambedkar believed in the transformation of the society through a revolutionary process of "annihilation of caste," while Gandhi was more accommodative and would like to retain the basic structure while he hoped for the liberation of the oppressed people through a gradual transformation, which, as we know, has not taken place up to now. The movie *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar* brings out very clearly the contrast between these two personalities, and Ambedkar was courageous enough to challenge Gandhi regarding his position of tolerance to the oppression that was going on. Gandhi failed to understand Ambedkar's concern in its depth because he was more an observer from a distance, while Ambedkar faced concrete problems of the oppressive caste system. Hence, he was convinced that some revolutionary process was required for the transformation of Indian society which was under the brahminic hegemony. The untouchables were considered as a blot on the society and they had no right to exist as free human beings, and they had to be slaves to the upper castes; they can be done away with impunity. Ambedkar himself being an untouchable experienced in

himself the cruelties, but as luck would have it, he was able to educate himself abroad and liberate himself, but he felt that his liberation should not only be personal but that all untouchables in the country should get liberated. Hence, he developed a plan of action, which was not in tune with Gandhi's conception of liberation of untouchables; as an accommodative term he even coined 'Harijans,' which later became pejorative and Dalits today hate to use this term. In this paper my humble attempt is to show how Ambedkar and Gandhi were social reformers but with different perceptions; one a revolutionary, the other a traditionalist with an accommodative outlook.

2. The Personality of Gandhi and the Ideals

We do not want to enter into a detailed description of Gandhi's personality because that is beyond our purview, but would like to mention a few characteristics which mark his personality. This will also help us to contrast the personality of Gandhi with that of Ambedkar. Mohandas was the sixth and last child of Sri Karamchand Gandhi, then Diwan or chief minister of Porbandar State, by his fourth wife Smt. Putlibai, who had no formal schooling but was a very pious lady. Mohandas was the original name of Gandhi given by his parents. Mahatma was later added to his name by the millions of India seeing his commitment to the freedom struggle and liberation of people. Who is a Mahatma? He is a Mahatma whose thoughts, words and deeds are in complete accord with each other—*manasyekam, vachasyekam, karmanyekam*. Vivekananda defined it thus: "He is a Mahatma whose heart bleeds for the poor, the downtrodden and the persecuted."

Gandhi's autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, gives us a true glimpse of his personality insofar as we can understand him from his expressed thoughts. Gandhi was a man in search of Truth, which he identified as God; but he was keenly aware that reaching this Truth is a herculean task, and that we would never attain Truth in its entirety. He sought after self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain *Moksha*. He also shows that his life is an open book, and that his reflections are done in public rather than behind closed doors.[1] He

1 Cf., Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth: An Autobiography* (Noida: OM Books International, Reprint 2015), xii-xiii.

was convinced that to attain the goal of liberation, whether of oneself or that of the others, is a task replete with risks, and the most essential thing required is self-purification. He says:

> But the path to self-purification is hard and steep. To attain to perfect purity, one has to become absolutely passion-free in thought, speech and action; to rise above the opposing currents of love and hatred, attachment and repulsion. I know that I have not in me as yet the triple purity, in spite of constant ceaseless striving for it. That is why the world's praise fails to move me; indeed it very often stings me. To conquer the subtle passions seems to me far harder than the physical conquest of the world by the force of arms. Ever since my return to India, I have had experiences of the dominant passions lying hidden within me. The knowledge of them has made me feel humiliated though not defeated. The experiences and experiments have sustained me and given me great joy. But I know I still have before me a difficult path to traverse. I must reduce myself to zero. So long as a man does not of his own free will put himself last among his fellow creatures, there is no salvation for him. *Ahimsa* is the farthest limit of humility.[2]

There are certain ideals to which Gandhi adhered to: they are Religion, Ahimsa, Satyāgraha, Democracy, Freedom and Equality, Untouchability, Morals and Politics, Right to Resist.

1.1. Religion

We place the thoughts of Gandhi on religion in consonance with the ideas of Buddha and Tolstoy; this is to show the complementarity of their thought pattern. Buddha tried to revolt against existing religion which exploited the credulity of simple people. Religion promoted social inequities and exploitation. While Buddha's was an outright denunciation of existing religion Gandhi tried to make compromises. But both gave importance to Truth; for Gandhi there is no religion higher than Truth and righteousness. Buddha recommended the following of the eight-fold path for attaining *Nirvāṇa*, while Gandhi recommended the following of the vows including truth, celibacy, non-stealing and non-possession for self-realization.[3] Regarding

2 Ibid., xiii.

3 Cf., Ibid., 3-4.

religion Tolstoy's words are: "I felt God clearly for the first time. … I knew that He existed and that I existed in Him that outside that there is nothing. I was in Him a limited being in the Illimitable; He in me the Illimitable within the limited."[4] Flowing from the presence of the Infinite within the finite is the unshakeable belief in the unity of all living creatures and the eternal bond of love ennobling and elevating them. Gandhi also expressed the same sentiment: "I subscribe to the belief or the philosophy that all life in its essence is one and that the humans are working consciously or unconsciously towards the realization of that identity. This belief requires a living faith in a living God who is the ultimate arbiter of our fate."[5] For Gandhi, Truth and God are interchangeable terms and Truth manifests itself in the form of concord and complete consistency between thought, word and deed. Tolstoy could not tolerate hypocrisy because it promotes corruption and embitterment. Gandhi wanted the unity of all religions. This thought was long ago expressed by Ashoka in his rock Edict 12 "He who does reverence to his own sect while disparaging the sects of others wholly from attachment to his own in reality, inflicts severe injury on his own sect; concord, therefore, is meritorious." Pleading for popularizing this spirit, Gandhi maintained: "… it is the duty of every cultured man or woman to read sympathetically the scriptures of the world. If we are to respect others' religions as we would have them to respect our own, a friendly study of the world's religions is a sacred duty."[6]

Gandhi held that one who is not prepared to order his life in unquestioning obedience to the laws of morality cannot be said to be a human being in the full sense of the term. Socrates, Plato and Gandhi believed that ethics is not a matter of outward conformity but of inward fulfillment of deep conviction accompanied by right action. Hence, Socrates' famous dictum: "Virtue is knowledge," which means that right thought must result in right action, that all work is an appeal from the seen to the unseen, a devout calling to the Higher Power.[7]

4 Kalidas Nag, *Tolstoy and Gandhi* (Patna: Pustak Bhandar, 1950), 18.

5 *Gandhi's Correspondence with the Government 1943-1944* (Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1957), 69.

6 *Young India*, 2nd September 1926.

7 Cf., Usha, *Gandhi and Humanism*, 14-15.

2.2. Ahimsa

Perhaps, the ideal for which Gandhi is most known is that of *ahimsa* or non-violence, and this was the 'weapon' with which he fought the Britishers. Gandhi conceived it not as a weapon of the coward but of the spiritually and mentally strong. It is true a lot of bloodshed took place when Indians fought among themselves especially at the time of partition, and Gandhi was so grieved at this that he refused to participate in the celebration of Independence. Ancient philosophies of Buddhism and Jainism helped him to reach this conviction. Buddha says in his *Dhammapāda* "Let a man overcome evil by good; let him overcome the greedy by generosity, and the liar by truth."[8] For Gandhi nonviolence is the law of human being. Stressing its positive aspect he asserts, "It is not merely a negative state of harmlessness but it is a positive state of love, of doing good even to the evil-doer."[9]

Satyāgraha is a practical expression of *ahimsa*. Hence, he says: "I am not a visionary. I claim to be a practical idealist. The religion of non-violence is not meant merely for the *ṛṣis* and the saints. It is meant for the common people as well. Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute. The spirit lies dormant in the brute and he knows no law but that of physical might. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law—to the strength of the Spirit."[10] Gandhi was definitely of the view that *Satyāgraha* and its different forms like non-cooperation, civil resistance and others are based on the ancient law of self-suffering. However, he made it clear that conscious suffering did not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer and stood for pitting one's soul against the will of the tyrant and resisting all his unjust commandments. Good many people argue that *Satyāgraha* is not a practical remedy to fight against injustice. But Gandhi tried to demonstrate its power both in South Africa and India, especially during the Quit India Struggle of 1942.[11]

8 *Dhammapāda*, 1. 1. 16.
9 *Young India*, 25 August 1920.
10 *Young India*, 11 August 1920.
11 Cf., Usha, *Gandhi and Humanism*, 5-6.

2.3. Democracy, Freedom and Equality

These were great ideals for Gandhi but his understanding may not be appreciated by a modern revolutionary. Plato mistrusted democracy and wanted 'Philosopher-kings' to rule, and these will be trained both in gymnastics and in many other disciplines like mathematics and music and last but not the least in philosophy. Gandhi also distrusted parliamentary democracy. Similarly the notion of 'freedom' is also not understood in the sense of laissez-faire, nor in the Sartrean sense of "man as absolutely free," but in the sense of conditioned freedom or contextualized freedom. Thoreau, Green and Gandhi conceive freedom as obedience to the law, not so much to law in the narrow legal sense of the term as to the moral law which is a categorical imperative. According to Green a man is free when he is in that "state in which he shall have realized his ideal of himself, shall be at one with the law he recognizes as that which he ought to obey, shall have become all that he has it in him to be, and fulfill the law of being."[12] "A man is free to speak the truth not free to lie, free to serve, not to exploit, free to sacrifice himself, but not free to kill or injure," says Gandhi.[13] Freedom, far from being mere absence of restraint, is construed as willing acceptance of restraint and control of self-imposed bonds and obligations. It is submission to the law of one's being and the conquest of the self, an attempt to correct the false values ascribed to things material, to subdue them and sublimate them. It is a rational synthesis of desires and passions in an integrated life. For Gandhi, the State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form; hence, his ideal is a stateless society. But he recognizes that this cannot be a practical possibility at least in the immediate future. So for the transitional period, he accepts to work for what he calls a predominantly nonviolent state—a state wherein the use of force would be reduced to the minimum.[14]

12 Thomas Hill Green, *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation* (London: Longman, Green & Co., 1950), 17-18.

13 M. K. Gandhi, *My Early Life (1869-1914*), ed., Mahadev Desai (Bombay: Oxford University Press), viii.

14 Cf., Usha, *Gandhi and Humanism,* 33-34.

'Equality' is another important value for a just society; although Gandhi valued equality in principle he failed to be as vociferous as Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Ambedkar, Buddha, Sri Narayana Guru, or such social reformers. A few words from Lincoln may be in place here as we find him making a passionate plea: "The real white man's burden is not insolently to dominate coloured or black people under the guise of protection; it is to desist from the hypocrisy which is eating into them. It is time white men learnt to treat every human being as their equal. There is no mystery about the whiteness of the skin. It has repeatedly been proved that given equal opportunity, be he of any colour or country, is fully equal to any other." He asserted in one of his speeches:

> Certainly, the Negro is not our equal in colour, perhaps not in many other respects; still, in the right to put into his mouth the bread that his own hands have earned, he is the equal of every other man, white or black. In pointing out that more has been given you, you cannot be justified in taking away the little which has been given him. All I ask for the Negro is that if you do not like him, let him alone. If God gave him but little, that little let him enjoy.[15]

Justifying the right to revolt Lincoln observed: "Any people anywhere being inclined and having the power have the right to rise up and shake off the existing government and form a new one that suits them better. That is a most valuable, a most sacred right—a right which we hope and believe is to liberate the world."[16]

2.4. Untouchability

As we discuss Ambedkar and Gandhi one of the important issues that will stand out is untouchability, which according to the Constitution and Law of the Land is a punishable offence, but still is virulently practiced in various parts of the country. We must admit that Gandhi was well aware of the problem, but still was afraid to displease the *Manuvatis*, and in this manner supported the existing caste system,

15 Abraham Lincoln, *Abraham Lincoln Speaks: A Selection of the Writings and Sayings of a Great American*, (USIS), 93.

16 As quoted in *Lincoln Dictionary*, Compiled by R. A. Wim, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), 17.

although some leaders like Gokhale were more vociferous in fighting it. Note his strong words:

> … From the standpoint of justice, humanity and national self-interest, I think all fair minded persons will have to admit that it is absolutely monstrous that a class of human beings with bodies similar to our own, with brains that can think and with hearts that can feel should be perpetually condemned to a low life of utter wretchedness, servitude and menial and moral degradation and that permanent barriers should be placed in their way so that it should be impossible for them ever to overcome them and improve their lot. This is deeply revolting to our sense of justice… I believe one has only to put oneself mentally into their places to realize how grievous this injustice is. We may touch a cat, we may touch a dog, we may touch any other animal, but the touch of these human beings is pollution. … The question there is in the first place a question of justice. … A great writer has said that castes are eminently useful for the preservation of society, but that they are utterly unsuited for purposes of progress. And, this I think is perfectly true.[17]

2.5. Varṇāśrama Dharma and Untouchability

Gandhi believed that the Varṇāśramic society as explained in the *Gīta* eliminates unworthy competition and has essentially a functional and not a hereditary basis. Gandhi refused to acknowledge any unbridgeable gap or subordination between *Varṇas*. For him the spirit behind caste is not one of superiority, as he observed: "The Spirit behind the caste is not one of arrogant superiority. It is the classification of different systems of self-culture."[18] Differentiating between the original concept of *Varṇadharma* and its perverted form reflected in the caste-system, he not only regarded the practice of untouchability as a canker corroding the Hindu society and wanted to remove it root and branch, but also to sympathize with the victims of this inhuman practice and to identify himself with them.

17 G. K. Gokhale, *Speeches of Gopal Krishna Gokhale*, 2nd edn. (Madras: G. A. Natesan & Co. 1916), 1054-57.

18 Gandhi, *Young India*, (29 December 1920), 3.

2.6. The Right to Resist and Civil Disobedience

For great thinkers like Socrates, Thoreau and Gandhi, there is a right inherent in man to protest and resist unjust laws and inhuman obligations placed on their shoulders. Both Socrates and Gandhi held that human beings owe prior allegiance to the law of God, to the dictates of one's conscience in preference to unjust or immoral laws of the state. Giving evidence before Lord Hunter, Gandhi said in an emphatic tone: "If I find that even my father has imposed upon me a law which is repugnant to my conscience, I think the last drastic course that I could adopt is respectfully telling him that I cannot obey it."[19] The remarks of Socrates before the judges are quite striking: "It is not for the accused to ask for mercy. It is his duty to ask for justice. The duty of the judge is not to make a present of justice but to weigh judgment."[20]

Both Thoreau and Gandhi believed that the laws of the state should be obeyed so long as they are just. Thoreau remarks: "I seek, rather I may say, even an excuse for conforming to the laws of the land. I am but too ready to conform to them."[21] Similarly, Gandhi is of the opinion that submission to the state law is the price a citizen pays for his personal liberty. In a statement before the Magistrate at Champaran he said, "I have disregarded the order served upon me not for want of respect for lawful authority but in obedience to the higher law of our being, the voice of conscience."[22]

However, submission to an unjust law, far from being a duty is an immoral barter for liberty. Thoreau is of the opinion that if the injustice arises as a result of the necessary friction of the machinery of the government, it may be overlooked; but if it is such that it requires one to be the agent of injustice, then "break the law and let your life be a counter-friction, cultivate enough boldness to stop the machine." Hence, his well known statement is: 'Under a government which

19 D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma,* Vol. I (Bombay: Vithalbhai K. Jhaveri and D. K. Tendulkar, 1951), 357.

20 Jowett, *Dialogues of Plato* Vol II*, Apology,* 128.

21 Henry Thoreau, *Essays and Other Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, ed., H. H. Dirks, (London: Walter Scott Ltd. n. d.), 86.

22 Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, 251.

imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is in prison.' "They are the lovers of law and order who observe the law when the government breaks it."[23] Exhorting the people to cultivate moral courage to resist unjust laws Gandhi observed: "Swaraj will come, not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition by all of the capacity to resist authority when it is abused."[24]

3. Ambedkar: Personality and Ideals

There is no doubt that Bhimrao Ambedkar was a great luminary who appeared on the horizon of India, and had his ideas of social transformation were accepted by Gandhiji and the Indian National Congress, the history of India, and especially that of the Dalits, would have been quite different. Ambedkar was a great lawyer, historian and philosopher, a scholar, statesman and humanist, a great believer in democracy and secularism. In spite of the hurdles that he faced, Dr. Ambedkar rose to the greatest heights and occupied important and prestigious positions in India purely by dint of hard work and unique merit which he possessed.[25] That he could come up to such a level of greatness is largely due to his intellectual acumen, which was unmatched by any leader, and due to his mentor, the King of Baroda, who helped him financially for his studies in America and England. Although he belonged to the *Mahar* caste in Maharashtra, one of the lowest castes even among the 'outcastes,' he became a threat to the higher castes because he attacked them with incontrovertible arguments the age-old caste system practiced by the Hindus. Recognizing his intellectual brilliance, his teacher, a Brahmin, tried to teach him, and the support of the King of Baroda helped him to be a great leader of the Untouchables. He himself being an untouchable understood the inhuman way his own fellow-brethren are being treated and vowed to do whatever is in his capacity to blot out this discrimination inflicted upon simple human beings in the name of the discredited caste system. He was, indeed, a prophet of equality and a man of determination and

23 Pyarelal, *Thoreau, Tolstoy and Gandhiji* (Calcutta: Benson's, 1958), 11.

24 Louis Fisher, *Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1951), 247-48. See also Usha, *Gandhi and Humanism*, 35-36.

25 K. L. Bhatia (ed.), *Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: Social Justice and the Indian Constitution*, (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, Rajouri Garden, 1995), 93.

courage. Being the chairman of the committee for the drafting of the Constitution of India he did his utmost to stress on the equality and fundamental rights of human beings.

3.1. Fight against Untouchability

The origin of the caste system (*varṇāśramadharma*) is an enigma to modern history. The association of castes with occupation suggests a functional interpretation of the social system. Mahatma Gandhi regarded *varṇāśrama* as a healthy division of work based on birth, and an ideal system conceived for the highest good of the society. The system assumed a great complexity and rigidity and resulted in widespread untouchability. Today anyone who acknowledges the truth can never justify the caste system.[26]

Gandhi wanted a change of heart instead of coercive measures; he said: "To remove untouchability is a penance that Caste Hindus owe to Hinduism and to themselves. The purification required is not of 'untouchables' but of the so-called superior castes. There is no vice that is special to the 'untouchables,' not even dirt and insanitation. It is our arrogance which binds us, superior Hindus, to our blemishes and which magnifies those of our downtrodden brethren whom we have suppressed and whom we keep under suppression."[27] While Ambedkar demanded separate electorate for the untouchables based on caste system, Gandhi opposed it bitterly and even took a fast unto death to withdraw the order of the government, and forced Ambedkar to submit. These all, as we can see, were only alibis to avoid the core issue of caste. Ambedkar believed that unless the annihilation of caste takes place in India, there is no future for the untouchables.

Ambedkar was more radical in his views: "Some men say that they should be satisfied with the abolition of untouchability only, leaving the caste system alone. The aim of abolition of untouchability alone without trying to abolish inequalities inherent in the caste system is a rather low … aim [and] is a crime. Let us probe the evil to its very roots and not be satisfied with mere palliatives to assuage our pain.

26 Ibid., 105.

27 M. K. Gandhi, *Untouchability*, ed., Brartan Kumarappa, (1964), 3.

If disease is not rightly diagnosed, the remedy will be useless and the cure may be delayed."[28]

3.2. Human Rights and Fundamental Rights

While fighting for equality for the untouchables Ambedkar was not pleading for some concessions but for their rights as human beings, and wanted that the Fundamental Rights be extended to all human beings including the untouchables. On August 14, 1931 Ambedkar went to meet Gandhi with his associates. When Ambedkar was shown in to the third floor, Gandhi was busy talking with his party men and eating some fruits. Ambedkar and his group bowed to Gandhi and sat on the blanket.

In the characteristic way which Gandhi observed in dealing with non-Muslim and non-European leaders and representatives, he did not look at first for a while at Ambedkar and kept chatting with Miss Slade and others. Ambedkar's men now feared that a little more indifference on the part of Gandhi and a collision would follow. Just then Gandhi turned to Ambedkar whom he saw for the first time, and after formal questions, he switched on to the main topic. (We quote the most important part of the conversation here.)

Gandhi: 'Well, Doctor, what have you to say in the matter?'

Ambedkar: 'You called me to hear your views. Please tell me what you have to say. Or you may please ask me some questions and I shall answer.'

Gandhi (with a staring look at Ambedkar): 'I understand that you have got some grievances against me and the Congress. I may tell you that I have been thinking over the problem of Untouchables ever since my school days, when you were not even born. You may perhaps be knowing what enormous amount of efforts I had put in to incorporate this problem in the programme of the Congress and make it a plank of the Congress platform. The Congress leaders opposed it on the plea

28 Quoted by M. L. Shahare, *Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar: His Life and Work* (1988), 31; cf., Bhatia, *Ambedkar*, 108.

that it was religious and social question, and as such it should not be mixed with political ones. This is not all. The Congress has spent not less than rupees twenty lakhs on the uplift of the Untouchables. And it is really surprising that men like you should offer opposition to me and to the Congress. If you have to say anything to justify your stand, you are free to do so.'

Ambedkar: 'It is true Mahatmaji that you started to think about the problem of Untouchables before I was born. All old and elderly persons always like to emphasize the point of age. It is also true that because of you the Congress Party gave recognition to the problem. But let me tell you frankly that Congress did nothing beyond giving formal recognition to this problem. You say the Congress spent more than rupees twenty lakhs on the uplift of the Untouchables. I say it was all waste. With such a backing I could have affected an astounding change in the outlook and common condition of my people. And in that event it would have been imperative for you to see me long before. But I tell you that the Congress is not sincere about its professions. Had it been sincere, it would have surely made the removal of untouchability a condition, like the wearing of khaddar, for becoming a member of the Congress. No person who did not employ untouchable women or men in his house, or rear up an untouchable student or take food at home with an untouchable student at least once a week should have allowed to be a member of the Congress. Had there been such a condition, you could have avoided the ridiculous sight where the President of the District Congress Committee was seen opposing the temple entry of the Untouchables!'

'You might say that Congress wanted strength and therefore it was unwise to lay down such a condition. Then my point is that Congress cares more for strength than for principles. This is my charge against you and the Congress. You say the British Government does not show a change of heart in regard to our problem, and so long as they remain adamant we would believe neither the Congress nor the Hindus. We believe in self-help and self-respect. We are not prepared to have faith in great leaders and Mahatmas. Let me be brutally frank about it. History tells that Mahatmas, like fleeting phantoms, raise dust, but

raise no level. Why should the Congressmen oppose our movement and dub me a traitor?'

(Ambedkar now grew animated. His face flushed and eyes glowed. He paused for a moment and then continued in a bitter, indignant tone)

Ambedkar: 'Gandhiji, I have no homeland.'

Gandhiji (taken aback and cutting him short): 'You have got a homeland, and from the reports that have reached me of your work at the Round Table Conference, I know you are a patriot of sterling worth.'

Ambedkar: 'You say I have a homeland, but still I repeat that I am without it. How can I call this land my own homeland, and this religion my own wherein we are treated worse than cats and dogs, wherein we cannot get water to drink? No self-respecting Untouchable worth the name will be proud of this land. The injustice and sufferings inflicted upon us by this land are so enormous, that if knowingly or unknowingly we fall a prey to disloyalty to this country, the responsibility for that act would be solely hers. I do not feel sorry for being branded as a traitor; for the responsibilities of our action lie with the land that dubs me a traitor. If at all I have rendered any national service as you say, helpful or beneficial, to the patriotic cause of this country, it is due to my unsullied conscience and not due to any patriotic feelings in me. If in my endeavour to secure human rights for my people, who have been trampled upon in this country for ages, I do any disservice to this country, it would not be a sin; and if any harm does not come to this country through my action, it may be due to my conscience. Owing to the promptings of my conscience I have been striving to win human rights for my people without meaning or doing any harm to this country.'

(The atmosphere turned grim. Faces changed colour. Gandhi was growing restless. He wanted to give a turn to Ambedkar's talk. Just them Ambedkar asked him the most pertinent question which was the object of the interview.)

Ambedkar: 'Everybody knows that the Muslims and the Sikhs are socially, politically and economically more advanced than the Untouchables. The first session of the Round Table Conference has given political recognition to the Muslim demands and has recommended political safeguards for them. The Congress has agreed to their demands. The first session has also given recognition to the political rights of the Depressed Classes and has recommended for them political safeguards and adequate representation. According to us that is beneficial to the Depressed Classes. What is your opinion?'

Gandhiji: 'I am against the political separation of the Untouchables from the Hindus. That would be absolutely suicidal.'

Ambedkar (rising): 'I thank you for your frank opinion. It is good that I know now where we stand as regards this vital problem. I take leave of you.'[29]

3.3. Educate, Organize and Agitate

Basing on his other triune formula, Liberty, Fraternity and Equality, Ambedkar also coined this similar motto for the liberation of the untouchables. Since he himself felt that his personal liberation has been achieved through the higher education that he received, he wanted his own people to profit from pursuing education as the most important goal. Only by education people come to realize their real oppressive status and then are motivated to fight against such oppression.[30] Ambedkar, himself being a victim of caste oppression, believed in giving a sense of identity and in instilling courage and confidence in them by organizing them to demand their social and political rights through active resistance and militant agitation. For

29 *The Navayug – Ambedkar*, Special Number, 13 April 1947. See also Dhananjay Keer, *Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, reprint 1987), 165-67.

30 As we can perceive in our country where the Dalits have been educated they get the inspiration and courage to fight against the oppression and alienation of the upper castes. One of the best examples is the status that Dalits in Kerala have reached. The early Marxists in particular persuaded them to pursue education, and with the help of reservation they were able to reach up to high positions, even to attain positions of honour like the President and Chief Justice of India.

this he knew education is a sine-qua-non. Hence, he proposed the slogan: "Educate, Organize, and Agitate."[31]

Ambedkar knew very well that unless 'reservation' in jobs, legislature and education was accorded to the Dalits they would never be in a position to be equal partners in the administration of the country and they would remain oppressed and slaves forever. There are three types of reservation: (1) job reservation, (2) reservation in the admissions to educational institutions, (3) legislative reservation.[32]

Ambedkar advocated the need for combining democracy and self-government. He criticized the western understanding of democracy, and he put forward his ideas very clearly as follows. 1) They omit to take into account the incontrovertible fact in every country there is a governing class. 2) They fail to realize that the resistance of a governing class is inconsistent with democracy and self-government. 3) Self-government and democracy become real when the governing class loses its power to capture the power to govern. 4) The government class may be so well entrenched that the servile classes will need other safeguards besides adult suffrage to achieve the same end. 5) Social outlook and social philosophy of the governing class is not taken into account.

Ambedkar defined democracy as "a form and method of government whereby revolutionary changes in the economic and social life of the people are brought about without bloodshed." He summarized the conditions precedent to the successful working of democracy as follows: 1) there should not be glaring inequalities in society, i.e., privileges for one class; 2) the existence of an opposition; 3) equality in law and administration; 4) observance of constitutional morality; 5) no tyranny of the majority; 6) moral order of society; and 7) public conscience.

Ambedkar also thought of the following devices for the maintenance of democracy. 1) Constitutional methods: He insisted on abandoning methods of revolution and the methods of civil disobedience, non-

31 Usha, *Gandhi and Humanism,* 164.

32 K. L. Bhatia (ed.), *Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : Social Justice and the Indian Constitution* (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, Rajouri Garden, 1995), 94-95.

cooperation and *satyāgraha*. He regarded these methods as "grammar of anarchy." 2) Not to lay liberties at the feet of a great man. According to him there was nothing wrong in being grateful to great men. He regarded '*bhakti*' in religion as a road to the salvation of the soul. But in politics, *bhakti* or hero-worship was a sure road to degradation and to eventual dictatorship. 3) Make a political democracy a social democracy; political democracy could not last unless there lay at the base of it social democracy.[33]

4. Ambedkar and Gandhi in Contrast

There is no doubt that both Gandhi and Ambedkar were great leaders, but with divergent and distinct vision of the liberation of the untouchables. The main reason is that Gandhi's goal was attainment of political freedom while remaining a conservative Hindu, on the contrary Ambedkar was a revolutionary who was convinced that liberation of the untouchables cannot be brought about through the ideal of conversion of caste Hindus; therefore struggle for liberation is inevitable, and they should be ready to pay the price for it. He stressed that power and prestige will come to them only through struggle. "The Mahatma has been claiming that the Congress stands for the Depressed Classes, and that the Congress represents the Depressed Classes more than I or my colleagues can do. To that claim I can only say that it is one of the false claims which irresponsible people keep on making, although the persons concerned with regard to those claims have been invariably denying them."[34] Against Gandhi's propaganda Ambedkar wrote from England in *Times of India* on October 12, "We are, however, reliably informed that in carrying his negotiations with our Muslim friends, Mr. Gandhi demanded that as one of the conditions for his accepting their fourteen points, they should oppose the claims of the Depressed Classes, and the small minorities." Ambedkar observed with his caustic ruthlessness: "To say this in public, I will agree if all others agree, and then to set out to work in private to prevent others from so agreeing by buying off those who are willing to agree, is, in our opinion, a piece of conduct unbecoming

33 Cf. Bhatia, *Ambedkar*, 142-44.

34 Proceedings of Federal Structure Committee & Minorities Committee, 534.

a Mahatma and to be expected only from an inveterate opponent of the Depressed Classes. Mr. Gandhi is not only not playing the part of a friend of the Depressed Classes, but he is not even playing the part of an honest foe."

In 1932 Gandhi went on fast as a protest against the decision of the British Government to grant separate seats to scheduled castes. Eminent leaders were persuading Gandhi to end his fast, and Ambedkar to sign a pact assuring Gandhi that separate electorates will not be accepted but that seats will be reserved for the Harijans. Doubting Gandhi's bonafide Ambedkar wrote: "There was nothing novel in the fast. It was a foul and filthy act. The fast was not for the benefit of the untouchables. It was against them and was the first form of coercion against a helpless people to give up the constitutional safeguards."[35]

Regarding the fight between Gandhi and Ambedkar Glorney Bolton observes: "Day after day Dr. Ambedkar came into greater prominence. He spoke for the Untouchables and every speech on the welfare of India, whether from a conservative or social platform, would contain a reference to the tragic plight of the Untouchables. It was a sentimental rather than a practical concern. Gandhi, by representing the Untouchables, would have drawn eulogies from almost every pulpit in England, but now Dr. Ambedkar had destroyed this platform. At first Mohammedans seemed to enjoy the discomfiture, but in time every delegate was wishing that Dr. Ambedkar would show Gandhi the courtesy to which his personal eminence certainly entitled him."[36]

The Mahatma said that he was the natural guardian of the Untouchables whereas Ambedkar said he was the natural leader of the Depressed Classes. The Mahatma's leadership of the Depressed Classes was sentimental and assumed. The leadership of Ambedkar was natural, actual and practical. The mighty man in Ambedkar was exposing man's inhumanity to man, and the ruthless strokes of hammer resounded throughout the world. Unaided by party caucuses,

35 Ambedkar, *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done*, 270-71.

36 Glorney Bolton, *The Tragedy of Gandhi*, 266-67; Dhananjay Keer, *Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission*, (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, reprint 1987), 183.

party funds, he was rising solely on the strength of his unbending will-power, phenomenal energy, heroic courage and great brains. With his conquering intellect he was strong enough to face a rationalist or a revolutionary, a Mahatma or a Messiah.[37]

Ambedkar, a great social humanist, believed in the equality of all human beings, considered every human being as an end in himself and stressed the need of the guarantee of social, economic, political and religious freedoms for all without any discrimination. In his view the aim of the state was to maintain the right of every subject to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness and to free-speech and free-exercise of religion.[38]

Conclusion

There is no doubt that Gandhi and Ambedkar were leaders unequalled in Indian history or even world history. We do not intend to question the honesty of Gandhi or his commitment to the nation, but we can safely say that he was more a reactionary than a revolutionary. Ambedkar was a revolutionary to the core, and was a man for change in the society, even to the annihilation of the caste system. Like Martin Luther King Jr. he was a dreamer eager to bring about his dream into reality. Although he failed to achieve the totality of his mission he did succeed in challenging Hinduism through his and his followers' outright conversion to Buddhism, calling it Neo-Buddhism.

As some of the recent surveys show, untouchability has not been eradicated and the catalogue of hardships and humiliations suffered by the Dalits is becoming more and more frightening. The Dalits are denied access to wells, temples, hotels, restaurants, hospitals, hostels and other organizations. Dalit students are forced to commit suicide (as it happened recently in Hyderabad Central University: the suicide of Dalit student Rohit Vemula) because of discrimination in the higher institutions of learning like universities. What is still more shocking is that even now inhuman atrocities like burning the Dalits alive, publicly hurling insults at them, their women being raped in broad daylight etc., are perpetrated on them with impunity. Even the

37 Dhananjay, *Ambedkar,* 182-83.
38 Ibid., 177.

high castes do not permit Dalits to wear sandals, ride by-cycles make them eat the excreta, drink the urine, etc. Inter-caste marriages are not tolerated, and the couples are simply done away with. It is true that Gandhi supported the Varṇāśramic system in the beginning; but he did not support the reprehensible practice of untouchability. He observed once: "Will untouchables remain untouchables in perpetuity? I would rather for that Hinduism died than that untouchability lived."[39]

Some broadminded caste Hindus hailed Ambedkar as a messiah born to reorganize Hindu society and to revitalize Hinduism. Ambedkar pressed the lingering problem of untouchability and accelerated the struggle of his people for human rights in his usual way with his whole heart, and with his whole soul, with all the strength of body and mind. Dangerous diseases require drastic remedies. A shock treatment was necessary to knock out the deep-rooted malady, and Ambedkar made the last bid.

Ambedkar brought about a revival of Buddhism in India. Today what we need is the arrival of the Buddha, and with Gurudev Tagore we could sing:

> Bring to this country once again the blessed name
> Which made the land of thy birth sacred to all distant lands!
> Let thy great awakening under the Bodhi Tree be fulfilled
> Let open the doors that are barred, and the resounding conch shell
> Proclaim thy arrival at Bharat's gate.
> Let, through innumerable voices, the gospel of an unmeasurable love announce Thy call.[40]

39 *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 48, (New Delhi: The Publications Division), 298.

40 Cf. Dhananjay, *Ambedkdar*, 264, 505.
As I complete this paper the welcome judgment of the Madras High Court has come that Perumal Murugan need not ask pardon for his book *Ardha Narīswaran (Half Man Half Woman)*; it is indeed a shame upon civilized society that literary writers do not have enough freedom to express their creative visions; and religion come on the way to suppress the freedom of expression!

REVERSING, DISPLACING ULTRA-NATIONALISM RIDING ON HINDUTVA

Victor Ferrao

Abstract: *The paper studies the enunciatory space that is neither completely inside nor outside the discourses that evolved from Eurocentric modes of domination. This position is becomes an in-between location also viewed as hybrid position of practice and negotiation by Homi Bhabha. One might also refer to it as catachresis, a term popularized by Gayatri Spivak, which meant 'reversing, displacing and seizing the apparatus of value coding.' Within this critic, we strive to understand what has passed off as Hindu nationalism has incarnated and enfleshed the colonial modes of domination while encoding them and thus concealing them in the Hindu religious and cultural modes. This study tries to generate an integral Indic response to a narrow nationalism that is meshed in modern Hinduism. Therefore, we attempt to work with the conceptual power of the term catachresis and explore how what has been called as 'Hindutva' migrates between Hinduism and Nationalism and effectively erases its fundamentalist fangs and legitimates its militant and even violent modus operandi. We propose a new form of catachresis that may reverse and displace the narrow nationalism that is riding on the wings of Hindutva.*

* * * * * * *

The forms of knowledge and beliefs authorized by the colonial discourses and uncritically assimilated by the Indic scholars have come under interrogation through what has been called 'the postcolonial studies.' This does not mean that these imperial

discourses were not questioned by nationalist and Marxist thinkers in India. But these critiques operated within the master-narratives of the West. Likewise the postcolonial critique examines and scrutinizes the afterlife of colonialism but remains aware that it inhabits the territory that it investigates and shuns the master-narratives of the West that informed our indic thought. Thus, its critique occupies an enunciatory space that is neither completely inside nor outside the discourses that evolved from Eurocentric modes of domination. This position becomes an in-between location indentified as hybrid position of practice and negotiation by Homi Bhabha. One might also refer to it as catachresis, a term popularized by Gayatri Spivak which meant 'reversing, displacing and seizing the apparatus of value coding.'[1] Within this critique, it would be illuminative how what has passed off as Hindu nationalism has incarnated and enfleshed as the colonial modes of domination while encoding them and thus concealing them in the Hindu religious and cultural modes. It might even be of great importance to study how the colonial modes of domination have led to the evolution of modern Hinduism. This might assist us to understand the relations of the colonization with Modern Hinduism. This study is vital to understand and generate an integral indic response to a narrow nationalism that is meshed in modern Hinduism. Therefore, with profound humility and deep admiration and respect to the Hindu faith I attempt to work with the conceptual power of the term *catachresis* and explore how what has been called as 'Hindutva' migrates between Hinduism and Nationalism and effectively erases its fundamentalist fangs and legitimates its militant and even violent *modus operandi*. Catachresis is employed consciously as well as unconsciously by those who are divided and joined by lines of oppression and urge for freedom from colonial trauma in post-colonial India. The call for proper citizenship but use of the improper and misnaming of what is essencialized as authentically Indian demonstrates how catachresis is at work in our society. While the study aims to remain within the conceptual fecundity of catachresis, it also employs the semiotics of

1 See, Gayatri Spivak, "Poststructuralism, Marginality, Postcoloniality and Value," in *Literary Theory Today*, ed., Peter Collier and Helga Geyer-Ryan (London: Polity Press, 1990), 228.

the empire of signs following the work of Roland Barthes[2] to widen and deepen our analysis enabled by catachresis.

1. Understanding *Catachresis*

Catachresis brings about a shift in meaning. In fact, we may say that it brings forth an erosion of meaning. This erosion of meaning displaces and replaces one meaning with another while part of the original meaning continues to slip in the new meaning. Catachresis is political and therefore can be liberatively or oppressively used. Here we shall try to understand its exploitation by the power elite to churn out a reductive Hindu Nationalism in our country. While I attempt to demonstrate the above catachresis, I remain vulnerable to someone saying this study is also catachresis from another point of view.

1.1. Catachresis and Social Engineering of Power Equations

The term 'catachresis' is derived from the Greek *katakheresis*, meaning 'misuse.' *Kata* carries the strong sense of perversion and *khresthai* means to use or to need. Thus, catachresis means 'misuse of a term.' It stands for an imposition of a sign on a meaning which has not yet its proper sign in a language. This happens often when we extend the meaning of sign to an idea that in no way has direct links with it. Thus, by means of catachresis, there is an engineering of twisting of the meaning to suit the interest of a community by inserting a new meaning that simultaneously places and displaces the original meaning and occupies its locus with a pretentious secondary original. This means the original meaning of a sign is lost and instead a reconfigured sense puts on the mask of originality. Thus, by exposing the employment of catachresis in the nationalist discourse, particularly one that attacks the secular and plural fabric of our country, we might be enabled to discern how its hegemony is steadily constructed and maintained so that we can bring about realignment of power knowledge equations in our society. This can be achieved by the unsettling of the epistemic practices of the powerful elite whose position of domination is constructed and legitimated through a normative knowledge tradition

2 See, Roland Barthes, *The Empire of Signs*, trans., Richard Howard (New York: the Noonday Press, 1982).

that often enjoys religious sanction. Hence, an attempt has to be made to redraw the boundaries of power by unmasking and unthinking the power strategies that serve the interest of the powerful elite. This means that by bringing to light how the operation of catachresis as an epistemic tool that seizes the apparatus of value coding of our society and puts on a nationalist posture that hides its imperialist intent, we can unveil the apparent mask that offers natural ladder to a construction of a triumphant subject who derives his/her patriotism to India by a way of allegiance to a religion. Through this a crass majoritarianism has risen under complex conditions. One of the main reasons for its rise is the mechanism of catachresis which is employed to code values in favour of the power elite in our country. Hence, opening of the mechanism of catachresis can dismantle the normative pretentious self appointed neo-civilizing mission that is forced upon the minorities, women and the tribals in India. With deep admiration of the all embracing ethos of authentic Hinduism, we have to contest the all hating neo face of Hinduism championed by its circus tamed masters to save the plural ethos of our great civilization.

1.2. Catachresis and Consensus Building

Catachresis is the creation of a new meaning through slight deviation from the original meaning.[3] But the fact that the new meanings are often encoded within the legacy of imperialist narrative and are scripted and coded in native frameworks that then go on to put on a nationalist, normative, religious and righteous face make them acceptable to an unsuspecting majority. Hence, the mechanism of catachresis is often used to build consensus, hegemony and a civilizing discourse. As a result the uncritical masses are sucked into a captive thinking and colonization of the minds (which becomes an attack on the agency of the people) is accomplished. Not everyone is bought into the framework of a designer mechanism of catachresis. There are those who interrogate and question the motive of the nuanced content imposed on them. Hence, there is complexity and resistance that inhibits a total capture of the agency of the people yet the fact that it does have its success cannot be denied. We can trace this complexity

3 G.C. Spivak, "Translation as Culture," in *Parallax* 6:1 (2000), 13-24.

in the response to nationalism with foundational religious tilt as it clearly shows the place of every citizen of our country. This attempt to fix social boundaries is linked to the mechanism of catachresis that tries to fixate its twisted meanings and represent them as fitting in the original order of things, but what really happens is that the original order of things becomes relativized and subdued in the imperial order of things championed by the power elite. Thus, the mechanism of catachresis craftily leads a migration into a social space imagined and assigned by the power elite. This means while some of our brethren are led to embrace a religious nationalism, yet are sadly assigned a lower space in the scheme of things in the promise of the imagined nation, while others like the minorities, tribals and women seem to have no room in the progressive march of the same nation envisaged by the crassly religious nationalist discourse.

1.3. Catachresis and Othering of the Other

Catachresis converts the other as an alter-ego and becomes all that one is not and is narcissistically othered as less than oneself. Although, there is a marked difference among everyone in our society in India, a *majoritarian identity* is construed on some maze of sameness while the differences of the religious other are highlighted. This intertwining of the self and its other is profoundly political and deeply entrenched in the nationalist discourse with a religious tilt. Hence, marking of the space of the self and the other has evolved as disciplinary practices that always keep the other under its gaze and finds ways how the other does not fit into an imagery of India. These practices enforce a view that sees the other as de-national or denationalized, based on an identification of self with what is thought to be national. Thus, the other is othered and demonized within the discursive field of the self and the other which in turn provides a protective cover for the churning of hate and intolerance in our society. Since meaning exists in an inter-subjectively held chain, the mechanism of catachresis becomes a tool of naming the self and its other. But the politics of naming fails to capture the surplus in the self and its other in the name. Hence, the self as well as its other remains un-nameable yet reductively named by employing the mechanism of catachresis. Hence, the politics of naming leaves something more within the named and un-nameable

void it retains by the very act of naming the self and its other. The surplus that remains unnamed can become a resource that can enable us to reflexively reflect on the politics of naming the self and its other in our society and discern the fault lines of the crass religious nationalism that is facing us today.

2. (Dis)locating the Politics in the Term 'Hindu'

The term Hindu was a geographical ascription and did not have a religious connotation for a long time.[4] Today it has come to embrace a religious meaning. This means it has certainly undergone an evolution and embellishment over the period of time. It only means that it has also undergone a catachresis. Hence, it is both possible and important to trace its complex ancestry. This might open a window on how it has been used through a mechanism of catachresis to mobilize an Identity that inhabits the political, social, legal, religious and national boundaries and unify, homogenize and name a large section of our country.

2.1. Ancestry of Hinduism as a Religious Term

Scholars agree that it was in the fourteenth century that one finds the term Hindu being ascribed a religious connotation. It was a tricky way employed by Islamic rulers to refer to their subjects other than Muslims in India as Hindus. We cannot trace any religious overtones to the term Hindu. The Vedas, the dharma shastras and other sacred books do not mention the term Hindu, although Arabs are said to have been calling all the people who live across the river Indus as Hindus. The geographical identity of the term is said to have remained current till fourteenth century. Even in the fourteenth century, it was a term that others the Muslims from the rest and hence as such remains a descriptive term for the diverse religious orientations of the non-Muslims in India. The term Hindu later will still undergo an evolution to reach a self conscious acceptance by majority of Indians. The edicts of the Mauryan emperor Asoka of the third century BCE mentions diverse religious sects while identifying two broad groups

4 The Persians used the term 'Hindoo' to refer to the people living across river sindu /Indus. Al-hind denoted people of a particular geographical area for the Arabs.

bramanashramanam (brahmanas) and the *shramanas* (Buddhist and Jain monks, *ajivakas* and other sects which had renunciatory orders and lay followers).[5] The Greek Megasthenes also refers to the Mauryan India as composed of *Brachmanes* and the *Sarmanes*.[6] In later days, we can trace the same two groups and their conflict being mentioned in the grammar of Patanjali.[7] The Chinese visitor, Hsoean Tang covering a period of thousand years also refers to the above as the main religious categories.[8] Al-Biruni's writings of the eleventh century also cite the two groups, *Brahmans* and the *shamaniyas*.[9] This twofold religious division of the Indian people began to fade after the fourteenth century rulers of India classified the entire range of non-Muslims as Hindu and new binary Hindu/ Muslim was born.[10] British colonizers continued with the broad dual classification of the Indian people as Muslims and Hindus, and steadily the religious imbrications of Hinduism reaches full circle. Earlier Portuguese used the term *gentoos* to refer to complex diverse groups other than Christians, Muslims and the Jews. Yet it is not until the nineteenth century that we can trace the use of the term Hindu as an all embracing signifier standing for a religious entity in both Indian and western academic circles.[11] Thus, the complex migration of the term Hindu too underwent a catachresis under the force of History.

2.2. Inscribing Indian National Character into Hinduism

Hindu was already a geographical term and hence it naturally imbricated the land of India. It steadily acquired tones of nationalism by way of largely nationalizing the orientalist position. Romila Thapar succinctly makes this point when she says, "Since it was easy to recognize other communities on the basis of religion, such

5 See, Romila Thapar, *Cultural Pasts* : *Essays in Early Indian History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1029.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., 1046.

11 See, Vasuda Dalmia, *The Nationalization of the Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Harischandra and the Nineteenth Century Banaras* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2010).

as Muslims and Christians, an effort was made to consolidate a parallel Hindu community... in Gramci's terms, the class that wishes to become hegemonic has to nationalize itself and the 'nationalist' Hinduism comes from the middle class."[12] Others assert that it is Brahmanism that became more expansive under the garb of Hindu nationalism. The rise of Hindu nationalism has a complex ancestry and has to be viewed in relation to the political alignments of the Muslim and the mobilization of the Dalits, the communist movement within the power apparatus of British colonization. It was within these inter-locked identities and desire for hegemony that a national Hindu identity was imagined and came into being. Hence, divergent histories and different selves merged into some kind of monolithic form to allow an imagination of a Hindu nation. But this Hindu nationalism was contested by Muslim nationalism and interrogated by the Dalit aspiration for liberation from caste oppression. Dalit leaders like Ambedkar and Periyar always upheld liberation of the Dalits in comparison to mere political freedom from the colonizers. The Hindu nationalism singularized and identified a golden past that it wished to resurrect and reclaim into a future while the Dalits saw the past as an unmitigated enslavement and repression and held that the future could never be left to lapse into the past.[13] Thus, we have anxieties where by the upper caste saw the past as eternal and yet paradoxically felt the fear of its loss in the present and future while the Dalits detested the past as a dark era of oppression and feared its emergence into the future.

2.3. Hindutva Hybridizing Hinduism

There is an essential ambiguity of the term Hinduism. This ambiguity is exploited by the coinage of the term Hindutva. With the construction of the term Hindutva, V.D. Savarkar[14] and his followers took control consciously or unconsciously of the value coding apparatus of Hinduism to a large extent and Hindutva steadily came to claim that it

12 Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion*: *Postcolonial Theory: India and* '*the Mystic East*' (London: Routledge, 1999), 108.

13 Aditya Nigam, *The Crises of Secular-Nationalism in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 183.

14 http://www.savarkar.org/content/pdfs/en/essentials_of_hindutva.v001.pdf accessed on 25th June 2016.

represents the essence of Hinduism. It has to be noted that term Hindutva does not encode Hinduism as a religion, yet it does not exclude it and extends it to Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism. Without leaving out the religious aspects it then crafts a Hindu nationality. Depending on the context, the meanings, text and subtext of Hindutva have evolved and continuously hybridized through multiple intersecting hierarchies of domination and subordination. The semantic axis of the term Hindutva dynamically grows in the context of its imagined demonic other. Thus, Hindutva being a political practice rather than mere set of ideas and concepts, essentially hybridizes to claim and maintain its hegemony. That is why Hindutva may be called as hyphenated Hinduism and may be regarded as a hegemonic strategy of invention of a tradition. It uses an intricate complex process to identify and construct its other and by doing so legitimates itself. Within this hybridizing process one may locate mimicry of the colonizers. Indeed, the followers of Hindutva are mimic men of the colonizers. We may view them as edited versions of the colonial masters and as such are carrying forward their civilizing mission. Thus, in a profound sense Hindutva has seized the value coding apparatus in our society and enforced Hinduness as the only source of the Indian self. Drawing from within the ruptures of colonial times, Hindutva offers a space for making of a neo-Hindu self and legitimates it as authentically national. Hindutva craftily opens up an interruptive time lag in the progressive myth of Hindu self as the only Indian self and pushes its subjects to actualize the myth.

3. The Empire of Signs and Hindutva Construction of Self

In order to understand how Hindutva Nationalism and the politics flowing from it is perpetuating its values through the seizure of the value coding apparatus of society, we have to understand how signs operate as signification system. The value coding apparatus runs the empire of signs. This brings us to an immanent analysis of the place of production of meaning, which is also the plane of enunciation and symbolization which subjugates and undoes us as true Indians.

3.1. Hindutva and the Loss of Self

Hindutva was born as a result of a sense of loss of self that was felt under the British colonization. It is indeed a response of recovery of a (dis)located self. The culture that emanates from the Hindutva ideology places the innocent Indian subjects into a sub-culture that brings to them a heightened awareness of possible threats to loss or disappearance of what is deemed as authentic Indian-ness. This felt sense of loss produces a sense of *déjà vu* (*jouissance*) bringing in cultivation of a self in line with the Hindutva ideology. But unfortunately, this new self remains displaced from the authentic self of Indians. Hence, paradoxically the frantic search for a lost self pushes the self to another spiral of loss of self. Hence, in the very act of mimesis which is consciously thought to be authentically Indian, one is somehow lost, displaced and pushed away from the every ethos of our country which is tolerant of diversity and plurality. A person driven to the Hindutva self is certainly an Indian and yet paradoxically through a level of indulgence into the project of cultivation of a self that revolts against the plural ethos of our civilization while at the same time claiming to stand within it is rendered (un)Indian. Although such a person remains under a delusion, a critical reflection with a focus on an immanent analysis of his/her very being (becoming) an Indian opens us to the paradox of estrangement from India. This stitching of a self under the driving pull of Hindutva may also be seen as de-nationalization as well as a kind of de-hinduization and has been already questioned by those who strictly separate Hinduism and Hindutva and resist their identification. Hence, the death of an authentic Indian in the rise of self driven by Hindutva nationalism is a hard truth that might astonish several among us. It is death of authentic Indian from the point of view of the plural Indian ethos. The self driven by Hindutva hybridizes some layers of Indian-ness and bring them into a new level of signification with a dash of passion and patriotism.

3.2. Hindutva and Subjection of Self

One can feel the narcissistic triumphant self riding on the ideology of Hindutva in India. This self is founded on a dissemination of

Hindutva signs, images, icons, spaces, texts, and practices which are produced, distributed and consumed by unsuspecting Hindus. The Hindutva signification system renders visible and therefore constructs pretentions for it as being based on reality. The visibilization of signification lays bare the ideology of Hindutva. The dissemination of Hindi as a literary langue and rise of Hindi discursive sphere particularly in the North, the saffron flags, red tilaks, trishuls, icons like Shivaji Maharaj slogans and other practices relay the message of Hindutva ideology. The TV serials like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata led to its wider reception. The empire of signs of Hindutva speaks in multivalent modes and embeds unexplored meanings. While there is plenitude of meanings in the Hindutva signs like any other signs there is loss of meaning the moment they are decoded in reductive mode which is idealized, naturalized and uncritically consumed. This process legitimates a self surfing on the empire of signs of Hindutva and constructs its subjectivity and somehow determines the dominant ways of relating to external reality. This means that in some way the metamorphosis of the self is related to what Aluthusser calls interpellations or turn of attitudes, beliefs and values caused by the political apparatus of state power whereby a citizen is turned into a subject.[15] This is why the self riding on the ideology of Hindutva is a domesticated and subjected self whose human agency is weakened. We certainly cannot assume that the empire of signs of Hindutva works its way in the consciousness of subjects of Hindutva in the same way. That is why we have several shades of hardened fanatics, moderates and fence sitters among them. All ideologies produce a web of resistance to their homogenizing effects and the same is true of Hindutva. But the fact that the representational apparatus (value coding apparatus) is constantly churning out signs, images, icons, spaces, texts and practices which summons the self under the subjection of the ideology of Hindutva cannot be dismissed away though everyone may respond to the imperative differently. Hence, the subjection of the self to the empire of signs of Hindutva is diverse and different in degree as well as in intensity.

15 Peter Pericles Trifonas, *Barthes and the Empire of Signs* (Cambridge: Icons Books, 2001), 31.

3.3. Sources of Our Self and Hindutva

The self surfing on the empire of signs of Hindutva remains under a false pretention of singular source of self. This forgetting of the plural sources of our self may be a reason behind the politics of hate and intolerance that most of Hindutva-vadis exhibit in different degrees. The erasure of the other sources of one's self from ones consciousness and acceptance of Hindutva ideology as a primary identity and its enforcement on every other is the hub around which the politics of Hindutva is rotating in our society. The occultation of the other sources of the self of a Hindutva-vadi is a product of consumption of the signs of the Hindutva Empire. Within this empire of signs a kind of self is territorialized and anchored, and becomes an object of fetish. This desire for a truncated self that roots itself in an invented tradition may be viewed as a desire springing from a sense of loss felt under colonization and in the presence of minority religions that have international reach. Rooting its self in the imagined one-dimensional source of self, the Hindutva-vadi embarks on a project of cultivation of self that is at once in conflict with those who root their self in the multiple sources that are embedded in our country. Hence, we can trace a fixation to one-dimensional identity which one is ready to protect even to the point of death. Though we can recognize a rigorous construction and circulation of the empire of the signs of Hindutva, the transformation of India into a Hindu Rashtra does not seem to be on the horizon. Thanks to several enlightened and secular Hindus, there is a strong resistance to monolithic Hindu nationalism. This refusal to an immersion into the empire of signs of Hindutva is an assertion of the plurality of the sources of an Indian self. Such contestation of idealization and mythification of Hindutva though not easy is being courageously pursued by young students in several national universities in our country today.

4. Opening up the Space of Counter Enunciation

Within the inhospitable nationalism that we are attempting in this study, we can open up a space of counter enunciation. It is a space that will find a home to what has been exorcised, expelled, excluded, excised and evicted. It is a space that ruptures the flow of triumphant

progressive march of the neo-Hindu self intoxicated on the opium of Hindutva. This can perhaps become a space of dissensus where dissent and the dissident can be at home. It is at this point that the dissident self of an Indian can emerge busting the burble of the Hindutva driven self.

4.1. Demystifying Hindutva

Roland Barthes' book, *Mythologies*[16] that deconstructed the contemporary myths of his society can be a great help to a project of demystification of the Hindutva. Besides, Charles Taylor's *Sources of Self*[17] can dismantle the myth of a uniform, singular source of the self of an Indian. But our study of catachresis of the term Hinduism and Hindutva as well as our attention to the seizure of the value coding apparatus that spins an empire of signs of Hindutva has the power to delegitimize the mono-culturing of the self of the Hindutva-vadi. It is certainly an antidote to our being-in-India that is being systematically brought under the gravitational power of Hindutva. Although our society is haunted by its hierarchical unevenness, it is plunged into a corrosive Hindu singularity that blinds itself to all diversity. Hence, resisting and provincializing Hindutva sites of divisive production and distribution of values and meanings is more urgent today than ever before. Hence, the challenge among other things may involve a disentanglement of Hindutva from Hinduism and Hinduism from nationalism. This means, Hindutva-centrism of nationalism has to wane away. Hindutva being an invented tradition is not there to stay. It is for us to expose how it has become the new opium of the masses in our country. Indeed, it is the heart of the heartless and sigh of the poor. It is here that we can catch it by its horns and expose how it increases impoverishment and poverty of the masses. The fact that economics of Hindutva excludes even its own adherents has potencies of the revolts from its weaker section. This revolt has begun particularly in our universities among the students of today where seizure of an alternate space of value construction and circulation can hasten the

16 Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annete Lavers (New York: The Noonday Press, 1991).

17 Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*: *The Making of Modern Identity* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989).

demystification of Hintudva. These and other movements celebrate many-ways-of-being Indians. These movements have the power to deflate the TINA doctrine of Hindutva and produce legitimacy to alternative ways-of-being-Indians.

4.2. Naming the Schizo in Hindutva

Hindutva schizolizes and draws boundaries that separate and divide Indians. The schizophrenic[18] mode of coding of values in the Socio-cognitive-political sphere of our country divides and subdues. It draws lines of segmentation and alienation of people in their own country. It means, Hindutva-vadins unfortunately evolve as a Schizo cut off from the plural ethos of our civilization and works to bring a split in our people from an imagined singularized and monocultured nationalism. One may understand the shift from Foucaultian disciplinary regimes to controlled societies in the rise and growth of Hindutva. It is not that disciplinary practices have diminished but they reached a new level of intensification so that disciplinary power remains immanent to the Hindutva subject. The Hindutva-vadins construct India as a body without organs and inscribe it with one-dimensional totalized Hindu cartography that brings about multiple split between the Hindus and the rest of Indians. There is reciprocal relation between the production of India as a body without organs and desire of the Hindutva-vadins. The integral Body becomes an organism with the fuller functioning of all its vital organs of which none is replaceable. But a body without an organ is a product that is instituted by desire that is subjected to some fixed socially authorized behaviour. In the case of Hindutva, the dream of Hindu nation is a body without organs which is produced by desire of the Hindu fundamentalist led by a narcissistic self fed on the egoistic ideology of Hindutva. Thus, we can notice a desire towards pre-determined becoming that is leading the self creation of the Hindutva-vadins. That is why we may say that it is the Schizo in the Hindtuva-vadins that appears to schizolize or divide our country.

18 See, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Gauttari, *Anti-Oedipus*: *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

4.3. Bringing Rhizomatic India Forward

Indians are rhizomatic communities where diversity and otherness flower in the same territory. The diversity in our country does not exist in isolation but it co-blossoms. India is a rhizome with vibrant networks among its diverse people that keep it together. The metaphor of a rhizome is drawn from biology by Deleuze and Gauttari in their famous book, *A Thousand Plateaus.*[19] It is a root that spreads horizontally in a non-hierarchical manner giving diverse sprouting points all the way. Though we have tried to trace its analogy with the people and their diversity in our country, yet the evil of caste hierarchy that is embedded in the depths of way-of-being-Indians may weaken it. But the fact that it allows diverse lines of flight, the metaphor of a rhizome can also illumine the diverse lines of flight that Indians ride to resist caste hegemony. That is why rhizome is an apt metaphor that characterizes the complexity of our cultures in our society. Thus, on the one hand this metaphor can signify the real India, while on the other hand it can expose how Hindutva ideology along with its value coding empire of sign is destroying the real India. It can assist us to map how real India is getting de-territorialized as Hindutva-driven nationalism is getting territorialized. While we are led to understand how terms like India, Hindu and Nationalism are losing their original content and are acquiring new meanings through a process that we have described as catachresis, it empowers us to ride a wave of resistance and arrest the social engineering that is out to invent an intolerant India.

Conclusion

Our study has attempted to bring to light how a monolinearized Hindutva masquerades as nationalism in our country. We have also tried to expose how it reverses, displaces, plural Hinduism and enforces a homogenized Hinduism which attacks the plural ethos of our country. Hence, seizing the apparatus of value coding, we have to try to reverse and displace the fanatic ideology of Hindutva. This would

19 See, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Gauttari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans., Brain Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

evolve the (dis)locating of the empire of the signs of Hindutva and the revival of the rhizomatic ways of being Indian. Gandhian Philosophy being fundamentally non-violent is open to plurality. It has been openly anti-hindutva. Although, some among us might think Gandian Philosophy is trapped in its linear categories and does not adequately consider reversing, displacing processes of non-linearity which are complexly at work in a constantly metamorphosing Hindutva, it still has its importance and has the seeds that can reverse and displace a Hindu singularity that is being pursued by the fundamentalist in our country. That is why this paper has an implicit Gandhian starting point but quickly takes up a critique of logo-centrism and logic of the same that is embedded in Hindutva and thinks through the inter-connections to deconstruct the complex and non-linear condition of Hindutva today.

Our study has attempted to bring to light how a monolinearized Hindutva masquerades as nationalism in our country. We have also tried to expose how it reverses, displaces, plural Hinduism and enforces a homogenized Hinduism which attacks the plural ethos of our country. Hence, seizing the apparatus of value coding, we have to try to reverse and displace the fanatic ideology of Hindutva. This would evolve the (dis)locating of the empire of the signs of Hindutva and the revival of the rhizomatic ways of being Indian.

GANDHIAN SECULARISM
In Contrast to Hindu Fundamentalism

Dominic K. Arputham

Abstract: *This article contrasts Gandhian Understanding of Indian Secularism with the Hindu Fundamentalism of Today. Secularism in India is ascribed to Gandhi, as he wanted the Indian state to be the homeland for all religions alike, and the Constitution gives the fundamental right to freely profess, practice and propagate one's religion. Gandhian secularism emphasizes the state's "neutrality" with regard to various religions, and it is different from the Western view of secularism. For the BJP Hindu nationalism equates "Indian-ness" with Hindutva ("Hindu-ness"). The Hindu nationalist agenda operates at multiple levels within Indian society. The BJP serve as the political arm of Hindu nationalism, the RSS fulfills a militant and ideological role, etc. These and numerous similar organizations are aimed at promoting Hindu nationalism. Gandhi's vision of the secular state is a place where religious values and discourse are cherished and respected in all spheres of life, the public as well as the private, but in which no single religion is allowed to dominate the others. The Hindutva groups see 'secularism' as an enemy to Hindu hegemony.*

* * * * * * *

Introduction

"Secularism is dead," the eminent Indian Public intellectual Ashis Nandy announced at a conference at Ohio in 2002.[1] The rapid increase

1 Ashis Nandy, "Closing the Debate on Secularism: A Personal Statement," in *The Crisis of Secularism in India*, ed., Anuradha Dingwaney Needham and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, (Durham, NC, 2007).

of fundamentalisms in Hinduism, Islamism and Christianity across the globe would appear to prove his statement right. Originally secularism emerged as an ethics of behavior and prescription for political organization that promises to supersede the violence and irrationality that seemed inherent in collective forms religious expression. It prescribed the separation of state and religion (religion and politics) in order to curb the religious conflicts. For the individual, it prescribed the world into private and public areas with activities appropriate to each.[2] The constitution did not have the word 'secular' until the 42nd Amendment in 1976, in Article 25.2.6. It was Prof. K.T. Shah who made a strenuous effort to get the provision regarding the secular character of India.[3] But the certainty of religious tolerance existed in India since independence by upholding secularism for decades is profoundly challenged by the contemporary fundamental religious movements—*Hindu nationalism* or *Fundamentalism* in particular.

The term 'secular state' is commonly used in the present-day India to describe the relationship that ought to exist between the state and the religion. In this article, I would like to focus on Gandhian understanding of secularism and its roots in the basic principles of the constitution of India. I am pretty sure that the founding fathers of our country must have had in mind the Gandhian understanding of secularism while formulating the constitution and its necessity for India to remain a vibrant secular country, difficult though it was. As a Catholic journalist for the past fifteen years, closely watching communalism in India, I also present my observations and assessments. I still believe that with all its imperfections, *secularism* in the sense in which it is defined in the Indian Constitution indeed appears to provide the best conditions under which the various religions can flourish in India.

1. Gandhian Secularism and Today's Hindu Fundamentalism

Secularism in India as envisaged by Gandhi, the Father of our Country, is distinctively different from the western view of secularism and totally different from the way the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Hindutva

2 Talal Asad, *Formation of Secularism*: *Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Sanford: 2003), 1-15.

3 Sailen Debnath, *Secularism-Eastern and Indian,* (Atlantic Publishers (P) Ltd), 43.

Sangh Parivar organizations view it today. Gandhi's secularism places the importance of the state's 'neutrality' between the many faiths in India. He duly recognized that India is a multicultural, multi-religious and multilingual country. Upholding the principle of secularism in India, according to Gandhi, is very important to maintain peace and prosperity. That's why he said, "I do not expect India of my dreams to develop one religion, i.e., to be wholly Hindu or wholly Christian or wholly Mussalman, but I want it to be wholly tolerant, with its religions working side by side with one another."[4] Gandhi's dream of making a multi-religious, multicultural and multilingual pluralistic India is made very clear in these words of his. Gandhi saw clearly the concept of 'equal respect for all faiths' (*Sarva Panth Sammabhav*) has always been regarded as an essential attribute of the state and statecraft of our country.

On the contrary, saffron is the colour of the Sangh Parivar ultra conservative Hindutva Movements's leader Bal Thackeray, the leader of Shiva Sena, one of the Sangh Parivar organizations, spoke as follows during the assembly election in 2006: "We are fighting this election for the protection of Hinduism. Therefore we do not care for the votes of the Muslims. This country belongs to Hindus and will remain so. We have come with the ideology of Hinduism. Shiv Sena will implement this ideology. Though this country belongs to Hindus, Ram and Krishna are insulted. We do not want the Muslim votes."[5]

Gandhi regarded equal respect for all religions as an essential attribute of the statecraft of our country. But what Gandhi regarded as essential—secularism—is rejected by the right-wing critics of today, branding it as something radically alien to Indian culture and tradition. They also forcefully advocate a return to genuine religion and the indigenous traditions of religious tolerance as the best means to preserve a pluralist and multi-religious Indian society.

The irony of the above-mentioned quotations essentially encapsulates the politics of Indian secularism. The political landscape today seems

4 An excerpt from the Speech of Mahatma Gandhi in 1946.

5 An extract from the Election Campaign Speech in Mumbai by Bal Thackeray in 2006.

to have become the territory of the non-rational: populated by new claims to selfhood—couched in terms of religion, nation, tribe, caste and culture—ready to use violence to assert their desires. Reason seems somehow disarmed. Secularism thus tends to be projected in India as an ideology that can be imposed rather than as a process of establishing the rights of citizens and introducing the changes required for this. Secularism and religion cannot be taken as equal ideologies since they not only imply a different kind of thought process but also dissimilar social concerns.

On the heels of Mandal came the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the political wing of the Sangh Parivar family of organization propagating an ideology of Hindu nationalism (Hindutva).[6] In the run-up from 1989 *Rath Yarta* around the country by Mr. L.K. Advani dressed as Hindu god Ram, and two years after Advani's voyage, the largest Sangh organization, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and World Hindu Council together with BJP took up the campaign of Ayodhya issue, gathered three lakhs of VHP *karsevaks* (activists) dismantled the Babri Masjid, a Muslim mosque built in 1528. In 1993 there was the most devastating violence between Hindus and Muslims in Mumbai. In 2002 Gujarat encountered a historically calculated violence against Muslims that was staged with the silent approval and blessings of the then Chief Minister Narendra Modi, the present Prime Minister of India. And there were worst instances of violence against Christians in Orissa, Assam and other states in the Northeast by the Hindu fundamental movements in India.

The events like Babri Masjid demolition, Gujarat riots against Muslims and violence against Christians in Orissa shocked the world. Barack Obama, the American president on his last visit cautioned of the danger of Hindu fundamental atrocities against minorities and called for a true conversion to live up the basic tenets of the Indian Constitution. Postcolonial India had long been held up as a success story. India, the world's largest democracy whose citizens have been enjoying freedom of speech and religious tolerance for decades, now encounters for the first time in BJP government big debates on

6 Shabnum Tejani, *Indian Secularism,* (Indiana: 2008), 3.

secularism. "This is not just a Hindu fundamentalist thing," Mr. Peter Alphonse, an Ex. MP said, "Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Jains have all claimed that their sentiments have been hurt."[7] There are certainly no easy answers in the ongoing struggle for secularism in Indian democracy, and the continuing ascendance of the Hindu Right, with its own distinctive claim to secularism, has further intensified the struggle. One cannot contend that the struggle for secularism will be exclusively a legal one. But it cannot be denied that law and legal discourse will be crucial in this broader discursive struggle, defending secularism from the corrosive influence of the Hindu Right.

I strongly believe that a careful consideration of the Gandhian political vision for India and the historical dynamics of secularism could help us today to approach the problem of communalism in India anew. Gandhi's political vision was ultimately based on the classical Indian myth of *Rama Rajya.* This myth describes the ideal polity, attributed to *Satya Yuga* or *Krita Yuga,* the golden age lost in the mists of antiquity and prehistory.[8] At the same time Gandhi was accurate in stating that his '*Ramrajya*' was not the rule of Hindus,[9] nor the revival of *Rajya* of Rama, the son of Dasharatha,[10] but as the establishment of the Kingdom of Righteousness on earth,[11] "the sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority."[12]

2. The All-Inclusive Nature of Gandhian Secularism

The founding fathers of our country wanted India from the beginning to be a secular state. Gandhi and Nehru had emphasized the secular

7 Peter Alphonse, *Sangh Parivar Movements Thrive in BJP Government*," *Nam Vazhvu*, A Catholic Regional Weekly, (Jan. 11, 2015), 8-11.

8 Raghvan N. Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York), 374-75.

9 M.K. Gandhi, *Village Swaraj* (Ahamedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1962), 256.

10 M.K. Gandhi, *In Search of the Supreme,* Vol. I (Ahamedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1961), 214.

11 M.K. Gandhi, *In Search of the Supreme,* Vol. III, (Ahamedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1962), 163.

12 Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Selections from Gandhi* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1948), 115.

foundation of the Indian state. Most of the assembly members while discussing the constitution's articles emphasized that the secularism as adopted in the Indian constitution is not to be an anti-religious concept; rather it is intended to prevent discrimination against the citizens on the basis of religion. H. V. Kamath clarifies it as follows: "When I say that a state should not identify itself with any particular religion, I do not mean that a state should be anti-religious or irreligious. India would be a secular state but according to me a secular state is neither a godless state nor an irreligious nor an anti-religious state."[13]

Although Gandhi opposed the concept of theocratic statehood, Gandhi strongly advocated the importance of religious ethics in political practice. Perhaps no single leader has succeeded to the same extent as Gandhi in terms of effectively appealing to the Indian masses from all walks of life.[14] So secularization must be promoted at the political level, thereby protecting the society from religious fundamentalism. Religious fundamentalism in the contemporary world is primarily a political condition and can be countered if the political inducement to fundamentalism is terminated. The use of Hindu religion for political gains, like the one we see today done by the rightist political parties, constitutes the biggest challenge to secularism. A reform of the electoral process is required so that there is a shift from vote bank politics and politics of Hindu communal mobilization (Majoritarianism) to mobilization on the basis of socio-economic issues. The 'saffronizing' political system in India is absolutely against the spirit of Gandhi who visualized that in the ultimate analysis only as a strong and secular state India can flourish. Gandhi wanted India to become a vibrant secular society.

Thus the real spirit of secularism in India is all-inclusiveness, religious pluralism and peaceful co-existence. However, it is politics, and not religion, which has brought in divisive elements. In a multi-religious society, if politics is not based on issues but on identities, it can prove

13 A.K. Saran, "Gandhi and the Concept of Politics: Towards a Normal Civilization," *Gandhi Marg*, vol. I, no. 11 (Feb. 1980), 682-83.

14 Ramesh Roy, *Self and Society*: *A Study of Gandhian Thought* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1985), 15-16.

highly divisive. It is not religious leaders by and large (with few exceptions) who divide and rule, but politicians who seek to mobilize votes on grounds of religious, caste and ethnic identities.

Secularism in India has always been more of a political than a philosophical phenomenon. Today there is an increasing use of one particular religion (Hinduism) in the social construction of ethnic and communal identity which is made the basis for the articulation of common economic interests and political mobilization. There is also the construction of a pan Indian Hindu consciousness that cuts across caste and regional divisions. While secularism has been integral to India's democracy for nearly seventy years, its limitations and implementations are indeed matters of acrimonious debate even to this day. The ideal of secularism that promotes equal respect for all religions has not been translated into social reality, as a result of which some sort of pseudo-secularism has cropped up and is talked about.

3. Indian Constitution and Secularism

The crucial fact that needs to be clarified with regard to secularism from the point of view of the Indian Constitution is to show how Indian secularism emerged as the nexus of all of the various categories of community and caste, nationalism and communalism, liberalism and democracy. The Indian Constitution has spelt out several provisions regarding the secular state even before the term secularism was introduced into the Preamble of the Constitution in 1976. Articles 14, 15, 16, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, and 325 incorporate the principles of 1) freedom of religion to individuals as well as to religions; 2) equality of citizenship and no discrimination on grounds of religion; 3) separation of state from religion.

What is evident from the Amendment Act of 1976 is that the intention of the Constitution is neither to oppose religion nor to promote a rationalization of culture, but merely to maintain the neutrality and impartiality of the state in matters of religion. The 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1976 states that Secular state means a republic in which there is equal respect for all religions: "a state that aids all

religions impartially, or a state that is separate from religion. Indian secular state is to aid all religions impartially."[15]

To examine the vicissitudes of the Indian experiment with secularism, one needs to understand that there is a dichotomy in Indian society: firstly, the *political society* comprising of parties, movements, non-party political formations which channelize popular demands through a form of mobilization of people based on a particular religion termed as democracy, and secondly the *civil society* for whom the affirmation of secularism has been through the state and its institutions, schools, universities and the English media. In Indian society, the merits of secularism have been familiarized only by the academic and intellectual circles (civil society) whereas Hindu communal history has pervaded the streets and common sense (political society).

The relation between state, society and religion is not well defined. The personal laws vary with religious communities, the precarious position of religious minorities, the affiliations of political formations with religious fundamentalists, increasing importance of the Hinduism and more importantly the Hindutva philosophies pose severe challenges to the success and future of secularism in India. It must be conceded that secularism in India today is too politicized and made use of as an ideology of the state and an instrument of gaining political power. It is necessary to find ways to depoliticize secularism and to move it further into the domain of civil society.

4. Possible Positions on the Question of Religious Freedom and Secularism

The issue of religious freedom and secularism, according to me, can be discussed in the light of three alternative theoretical positions.

The first position is the no-concern theory of secularism that sees a definite line of separation between religion and state. Given the principles of religious liberty and freedom of expression, it is up to the individuals to decide whether one wants to be a believer or not, or to adhere to this religion or that. Based on a doctrine of intolerance

15 Rajeev Bhargava, ed., *Secularism and Its Critics,* (Oxford Press), 227.

it confines religion to the private realm. This approach leads to a conception of a secular state as one that stays away from religion per se. This position saw the rise of Hindutva in the 1980s as a failure of secular state.[16]

According to the second position no links between the state and religion should be permitted, not because it would weaken the state, but it would demean religion. Religion cannot be subjected to the whims of changing majorities by allowing the democratic state to intervene in religious affairs.

The third position termed as the 'equal respect theory' begins with the principle of religious liberty, but holds that in a society like India where religion is integrally related to the lives of the people, the state should not stay away from all religions but should respect all religions alike.

When one goes through the Constituent Assembly Debates, it is very evident that the main issues of contention are: whether the right to religious freedom should be the right to religious worship or to religious practice; whether the state should recognize only linguistic minorities or religious minorities as well; the dispute over the Uniform Civil Code over political reservation of religious minorities; whether there should be religious instruction in state-aided schools. What is finally reflected in the articles of the constitution is a broad definition of the right to religion: the right to profess, practice and propagate. But nonetheless there are no political safeguards assured for the religious minorities.

5. Evaluation of Gandhian Conception of Secularism

In the light of what has been delineated above, it is very clear that Gandhi was basically a religious person and he considered religion as part and parcel of every individual's life. It is beyond doubt that Gandhi certainly was a lover of peace and harmony in the 20th century world. In a simple way he sincerely guided the Indian politics in the light of his ideas. For the peace-less world he left the gospel of peace,

16 Shabnum Tejani, *Indian Secularism,* (Indiana, 2008), 7.

love, truth and non-violence. There is no doubt that his message will be guiding the people of India and elsewhere in the years to come. The core of Gandhism is Truth. He claimed the truth to be universal and absolute, although he does not clarify it. His understanding of non-violence too is not 'understood' by many an admirer of Gandhi.

Gandhi's idea of *Ramraj* too has created confusion in people. The word, *Ramraj*, has nothing to do with Hinduism, yet the name *Ram* aroused suspicion among the Indian Muslims. Gandhiji's loin-cloth-appearance, daily prayer, habit of not drinking cow milk, etc., further put the communal leaders to a misunderstanding whether Gandhiji was going to make the British India into a Hindu India. Gandhiji did not separate religion from politics and was a guide on the either way. The humble suggestion made by S.D. Sharma to Gandhiji is very significant: "It pains me, as it may pain some if not all of your audience, the number of inconsistencies found in your day to day bearing. It is neither logic nor diplomacy. On the other hand it has encouraged rank communalism of the league type (Muslims)…your preaching of *Ramraj* brought communalistic vision to the Leaguers who dreaded that you were out to establish *Hindu Raj*...Politics versus Religion, you please either be a religious teacher or a political guru (preacher). You cannot be both…"[17] A strong protest was raised against the doctrine or *Ramraj* by the Muslim Leaguers.[18]

The Gandhian scheme of education that placed great emphasis on the Ramayana and the discrimination of education according to the religious identity of the Hindus and Muslims separately, more or less, added fuel to the fire of communalism. His insistence on the compulsory religious education and the learning of respective religious traditions in Sanskrit for the Hindus and in Arabic for the Muslims appeared to some as the beginning of the end of any hope in secularism. The well-known Wardha Education Scheme, as it was inclusive of Gandhian education system, was completely rejected by the Muslim folks.[19] Though we should admit that Gandhiji became

17 Letter to Mahatma Gandhi by S.D. Sharma, Calcutta, File No. CL-8/1946. A.I.C.C. Papers, N.M.M.L., New Delhi.

18 File No. B-10/1938, A.I.C.C. Papers, N.M.M.L., (New Delhi), 91-93.

19 *Modern Review,* vol. LXIV, No. 2 (August 1938), 526.

a martyr for the sake of communal unity,[20] yet his doctrine, perhaps, unknowingly provoked the Muslim League. It was a tragedy indeed.[21]

6. Misunderstood Relationship between Democracy and Secularism

India that consisted of 565 princely states and thirteen British-ruled states before 1947 became united into one sovereign nation with secular democracy having its Constitution as the primary guiding principle. In our country, eight major religious communities co-exist, namely the Hindus (82%), Muslims (12.12%), Christians (2.6%), Sikhs (2%), Buddhists (0.7%), Jains (0.4%), Parsis (0.3%) and Jews (0.1%). The single-most defining element of the Indian democracy is the acceptance of all religions in the nation's Constitution, granting explicit freedom to all its citizens and residents to practice their faiths without violating others' right to do so. It is from this explicit freedom that citizens experience other freedoms necessary to realize their lives.

A democratic state need not necessarily be secular. Democracies are perfectly capable of giving an important role to religion in the affairs of the state. It is the problem of aggregation that is of utmost importance. A democratic state will tend to reflect in its own makeup the complexity of the individuals it represents.[22] The challenge secularism faces therefore is to devise an answer to the problem of intolerant religions. If one or more religions in a pluralistic society preach their unwillingness to co-exist with the others, and insist on religion as the unitary framework for individual, society, and state, how do we define a secular regime for such societies? The mode of toleration in India has historically included absorption, subjugation and marginalization of religious minorities. But I am sure that the Indian democracy provides mechanisms available in a secular democracy to temper extremism and intolerance inherent in most

20 Larry Collins and Lapierre, *Freedom at Midnight* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1975), 434-42.

21 But it must be noted that the real enemies of Gandhian approach were the fanatical Hindus, as evident from the persons behind the tragic death of Gandhiji.

22 Rajeev Bhargava, ed., *Secularism and Its Critics,* (Oxford Press), 229.

religions; it leads diverse religious communities, especially the Hindu majority, to accept that the well being of all human beings consists in respecting the religious and civil rights of others, particularly those of minorities.

Whether India is a state that is sufficiently secular and favourable for the survival of secularism depends ultimately upon the readiness and ability of its people to maintain an autonomous political community. The challenges of casteism, communalism and Hindu religious fundamentalism involving separatism in India are the major threats to our secular state. If India has to emerge as a secular and democratic polity, there should be a stop to communal riots and caste carnage.

Large scale communal riots broke out in India after the demolition of Babri Masjid by the VHP Sangh Parivar activists in Ayodhya . Both Hindus and Muslims were killed in the communal backlash that followed. The attacks on Christians in Orissa and Gujarat made headlines in electronic and print media. The grouse of the Sangh Parivar is that the Muslims had demolished their temples, humiliated Hindus during Muslim rule and partitioned India and thus justified their animosity and attacks on Muslims, and the Christians as well. The Godhra and Post-Godhra incidents point to the absence of political sanity in Gujarat. Nothing could represent a more provocative insult to the national commitment to communal harmony and pluralist co-existence than Narendra Modi's repeated taunts of the Muslim minority people of his own state, his insinuations that they are susceptible to the supposedly adventurous designs of Pakistan and his final desperate suggestion that if the opposition Congress wins the election, it would represent a victory for Pakistan. The terrorist attack on Indian Parliament on 13 December 2001 was unprecedented not only in the history of India but also in the annals of democracy in the world. It manifests utter disregard and contempt for parliamentary democracy by Pakistan which only can boast of a military democracy.

Thus it is evident that during the last seventy years of independence, India has witnessed both successes and failures in running the secular democratic processes. It has evolved a lasting secular constitution,

a viable political system and a functional federal secular polity with strong democratic traditions on the one hand, but on the other hand it has also garnered several communal riots and caste wars. However, it is politics, which proves to be divisive and not religion. This is the only challenge that India's secular democracy has to overcome. Thus the real spirit of secularism in India lies in all-inclusiveness, religious pluralism and peaceful co-existence.

Conclusion

In this article I have more or less given a bird's eye-view of what is secularism according to Gandhi. Now I would like to state what Sailen Debnath in his book *Secularism*: *Western and Indian* has mentioned about Gandhi in nutshell, "It is a foregone conclusion that Gandhi was a religious man, thinker, and politician; on his firm stand of faith, belief and activity we, of course, cannot call him a secular politician or thinker in conventional sense."[23]

We cannot also compare Gandhi with any of the Western thinkers of secularism; he seems to have been the heir of Christian Humanism, Buddhist non-violence and Vaishnavite love for all humanity devoid of any discrimination that could bring about any division of humankind. He was a Hindu; but his Hinduism was universal in nature, broad in outlook and tolerant in practice. According to him the main and general objective of secularism was to establish a sphere of mutual and peaceful co-existence for people belonging to various religions. Indeed he asked the people and practiced himself in the best possible way to respect all religions in the name of God and Truth. Gandhi firmly believed that if all the people of the country or of the world practiced non-violence, there then would have remained no fear of terror, and even without any proclamation of secularism any country or state could enjoy peaceful atmosphere; and thus the very objective of secularism could automatically be attained.

23 Sailen Debnath, *Secularism: Eastern and Indian,* (Atlantic Publishers (P) Ltd), 119.

Part - IV

Deepening Our Religious Home

RELIGION as Our Home

DEEPENING OUR RELIGIOUS HOME
With Postmodern Understanding

S. Sekar Sebastin

Abstract: *Religion is a popular phenomenon which has inspiring as well as irritating features. With its inspiring element, it makes people find themselves at home with their respective religions and enables them to relate with others of different religions in the spirit of human values and principles. It becomes also irritating when people find it being used for utilitarian purposes, at the neglect of human values. Thus this article begins with a fairly acceptable notion of religion with its salient features and how it got institutionalized in the course of time. Hence there is a need of deepening our 'religious home' with the help of postmodern critique. We try to present how postmodernism with its various characteristics of critique helps religion to become more meaningful, more humane, and more altruistic. This is very much advocated by the postmodern philosopher of religion Emmanuel Levinas who ventured to offer an adult religion acceptable to all, and Dr Pushparajan pictures Gandhi as a lover of religions in the spirit of trans-cultural and inter-religious spirit.*

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Religion is a phenomenon widespread among all human beings. With its inseparable feature from the existence of humans, religion plays a vital role in shaping and molding the essence of human nature. It is also a manifestation of certain deeply felt human aspirations and needs. In spite of the focus on divine and sacred entities in religion, it has primarily to do with people and their needs. It has been a common feature from the earliest times that religion has been the focal point

in human existence as it involves the whole of human person. At the same time, we cannot be blind to the other side of religion as it has been growing with an 'exclusive' approach. Today, the characteristic features of religion fall under the four Cs, namely, *Creed* with belief systems and doctrines, *Code* consisting of certain rules of conduct that may even seem unethical to outsiders, *Cult* including worship and other practices, and *Community* keeping the believers together. Religions concern the whole humanity and they tend to totalize the worldviews. With its totalizing character, they cannot accept any opposition and rivals. Hence rereading and revisiting the religion becomes necessary in order to deepen the religious home. In order to accomplish the desired task, we employ the postmodern method so as to have fruitful and meaningful approach to religion, as result of which human beings can feel *at home* with their respective religions and respect other religions accentuating human values.

1. A Preliminary Look at Religion

Religion is a concept which escapes a simple definition because of its complex nature, and it cannot be comprehended in a simple way. We begin with the etymological meaning of religion. We find its root in Latin '*religio'* and *re-legare* which means *to bind together*. It refers to the relationship between the Divine Being and human beings. In this sense, the role of religion is to bind human beings with God.[1] *The Concise Dictionary of Religion* provides us with a simple definition of religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things."[2] The same dictionary presents also a more comprehensive definition:

> Religion is a set of institutionalised rituals identified with a tradition and expressing and/or evoking sacral sentiments directed at a divine or trans-divine focus seen in the context of the human phenomenological environment and at least partially described by myths, or by myths and doctrines.[3]

1 Robert Barnhar, ed., *Chambers Dictionary of Etymology* (New York: Chambers, 1988), 907.

2 Irving Hexham, *The Concise Dictionary of Religion* (Carol Stream, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1994), 186.

3 Ibid., 187.

The Sanskrit term for religion is '*dharma*' (*dhr – dharayati*) which means *to hold* or *to support*. However, both the definitions highlight the harmony and stability realized through religion at the individual and societal level. Furthermore, the term *matam* is associated with some form of creed, dogma, ritual and other similar popularly known religious factors that are used by individuals and groups for the fulfillment of life-needs.[4] Thus religion is an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings.

With these basic understanding of religion we can look into the profound meaning of 'religious home.' Religious home exhorts that there is no individual person or common people anywhere in the glob or at any time in the past that has not had possessed deeply imbedded religious impulses. Apart from the concept of religion as an institution, the primal responses, outcries, anguish and fear, calls for help, or prayers for escape, often involuntary in character, are written into the generic code of all humankind within religious home.[5]

2. Basic Characteristics of Religions

Every definition of religion is partial. It never manifests fully all that religion stands for. Hence we can understand the meaning of religion by abstracting certain fundamental elements from various definitions. 1) Religion deals with people's relationship to the unseen world of spirits, ancestors, gods, and demons. 2) Religion usually has a system of myths about the unseen worlds. These myths are concretised and remembered through rituals that are designed for communing with or propitiating the spirits. 3) Religion also has a cult of organized worship, temples, priests, and scriptures. 4) Religion usually proclaims some doctrines about Transcendent Being, life beyond death, eternal survival in heaven or hell, rebirth etc. 5) Religion instills a code of conduct or moral behaviour.[6]

4 Augustine Perumalil, *The Origin and Nature of Religion* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2001), 29.

5 Robert Frykenberg, "Pietism and Primal Religions," in *Negotiating Borders: Theological Explorations in the Global Era*, ed., Patrick Gnanapragasam & Elisabeth (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2008), 429.

6 Augustine Perumalil, *The Origin and Nature of Religion*, 298.

3. Religious Home and Home of Religion

The various definitions and basic characteristics of religion indicate that there has been a search for a genuine self-understanding of religion. It knocked at the doors of morality, knowledge and aesthetic consciousness and sentiments. At the same time religion did not find a welcoming host as it has been under various attacks from different walks of life like primitive science, illusion, progeny of fear and anxiety, and opium of the poor. Simultaneously, religion has been responding to those attacks in the experience of the sacred, relating to the sacred by avoiding its wrath, winning its favour, feeling its strength, experiencing its loving acceptance and forgiveness and attaining communion with it. With this new self-understanding, religion seems to have found a home for itself as religious home embracing human beings in their nature, in their deepest needs, experiences and aspirations, in their longing to be pure and holy, in their yearning for freedom from fear, ambiguity, anxiety, meaninglessness and passions.[7]

When human beings feel at home with their religions, they do not try to lead a life with imaginations so as to escape from the anxieties of the real world. As religious persons, they persevere to overcome the anxieties of real life with the use of symbols, and try to expand their consciousness and love in order to possess all the values to their utmost limits. A person who finds religion as home, desires richer, deeper and wider experience seeking something noble and superior. Religion as home opens up the death of human spiritual life which is usually covered up by the smoke and dust of daily life. It reminds human persons that this present situation is not an unavoidable drudgery but it can be conquered and gives promise of help, guidance and inspiration for those who seek richness and fullness of existence. It offers explanations to the paradoxes of life, freedom from the slavery of chaotic impulses and emotions, and ideals and models to guide life.[8]

Religion's dynamism exposes its nature of home; religion as dynamism comes from the restlessness of the human heart, the urge in the human

7 Ibid., 298.
8 Ibid.

heart to conquer negative experiences and find integration within the self and with the surrounding reality. In religion the entire process takes place under the inspiration of the vision of the sacred. The sense of sacred could be experienced not only as awesome because of its majesty, power, grandeur and holiness but also as benevolent of unconditional worth and the source of all values.[9]

Human persons personify the sacred objects in imagination. They idealize whatever is found desirable in human nature and superimpose them on the person experienced as sacred and then immortalize them. In religions which have no concept of personal God, there is no personification or superimposition of ideals on sacred objects. In those religions, human beings have to depend on their own power and seek perfection with the vision of abstract ideas. In other religions, gods represent symbolically the fullness of human life and become concrete symbols of the inaccessible human ideal, attracting human beings and leading them to the ultimate fulfillment of life and the final experience of transcendence.[10]

The practical aspect of religion is worship which makes religion as home. Broadly understood, it includes affirmations of faith, readings of religious literature, singing of hymns, chanting of mantras and performance of rituals. It requires subjective as well as outward participation. Worship in its fullest sense is the activity of affirming the sacred and strengthening its place in our lives. Through worship we appropriate the significance of the sacred and use it to reorient our lives. We also regain perspectives on our lives as a whole so as not to be crushed in the welter of demands, temptations, distractions and tragedies that bombard us from time to time.[11] Religion, therefore, cannot be equated with any given dogma or belief system if it is to embrace the humanity to feel at home.

4. Postmodernism at the Service of Religious Home

After presenting both the definition of religion as an institution and the need of making it a home, our effort begins to deepen

9 Ibid., 299.
10 Ibid., 301.
11 Ibid., 304.

'religious home' with the aid of postmodernism. Postmodernism not only eludes but rejects precise definition or systemization. An enormous variety of various expressive intellectual trends and historical contexts at the level of theory have helped to constitute what is labeled as postmodernism today.

4.1. Preliminary Exposition of Postmodernism

Postmodernism is referred as the intellectual mood and cultural expression in contemporary society. These expressions call into question the ideals, principles and values that lay at the heart of the modern mind set. The postmodern ethos resists unified, all-encompassing and universally valid explanations. It replaces these with a respect for difference and a celebration of the local and particular. "Modernism suffers from elitism. Postmodernism is trying to get over that elitism," by reaching out "towards the vernacular and the commercial slang of the street."[12]

Postmodern context necessitates a serious study of religion and revision of many of the traditional perceptions on religion. In such a situation what keeps on haunting humanity today is not the relevance of religion in human life but the question of understanding religion as a unified system of narratives, doctrines, possible facts and practices, which keeps and binds people together. By drawing our attention to the multiplicity, diversity and contingency of reality, postmodernism has a profound impact on religious thought as it prescribes a critical outlook of anything which is objective, absolute, universal and foundational. The postmodern era has an impact on different dimensions of the contemporary individual's social functioning, which incorporates perceptions regarding religion and formal structures. Hence we employ postmodernism as a method to deepen the religious home which has been considered as exclusive, rigid, structured and formal in its views and aspirations.

12 Perry Anderson, *The Origins of Postmodernity* (London: Verso Publications, 2002), 22.

4.2. 'Religious Home' with the Dawn of Postmodernism

The purpose of deepening the 'religious home' with the help of postmodernism could begin with how God and religion were treated during the age of modernity. For modern thinkers, religion and God failed to meet the demands of rationality with objective proof. Religion was not scientific enough to be taken seriously; it was that 'other' that could simply be ignored or dismissed. It was the corollary of the enthronement of human reason. Investing human reason with omnipotence and infallibility was tantamount to its deification. The modernists propagated a view of religion as a mass of quaint, outdated superstitions, founded on oppressive and dogmatic assertions and unworthy of a truly 'modern' person. Hence they saw to it that it has his or her special responsibility to liberate the deluded people from the clutches of religion. There was no God and no hereafter. Rejecting the idea of God, modernism retained the conviction of the purposiveness of history which was considered as a naturally forward movement, spontaneously surging upwards with everyone and everything inevitably getting better and better with the march of time.[13]

The modernity's processes have led to a disenchantment of the world, which has in turn contributed to diminished moral responsibility. The formerly mainly religious worldview of traditional society has collapsed, which has created a greater potential for more fluid identity construction and the rise of individualism.[14] As a result, there is no fixed source of 'right' action. There are no longer traditional patterns, codes and rules to guide and serve as orientation points for individuals.

5. The Necessity of Deepening the 'Religious Home'

We must admit that postmodernism has not entailed a decline in religiosity or a decline in traditional religiosity as new forms of religious expression emerge. While postmodern questioning of 'meta-

13 Jose Elampasserry, "Postmodernism and Religion," *Satyanilayam: Chennai Journal of Intercultural Philosophy* No. 12, (Aug. 2007), 19.

14 Mason, 'The Ethics of Integrity: Educational Values beyond Postmodern Ethics,' *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 35 (1), (2001), 48.

narrative' and authority has indeed meant a drop in participation in institutional and traditional religion, it has not meant a drop in religiosity or religious participation. Postmodernism sees a rise in more personal, alternative forms of religion.[15] People move away from 'religion' as something anchored in organized worship and systematic beliefs within an institution, to a self-made 'spirituality' outside formal structures, based on experience, having no doctrine, and making no claim to philosophical coherence.[16]

Thus we can notice the loss of boundaries between the religious and the sacred in postmodernism. Religious consumers are referred as people moving from religion to religion to find their own meaning and satisfaction, in a movement characterized by the catch-phrase, "I am not religious, but I am very spiritual." New Age religion and 'spirituality' are increasingly replacing traditional religion with an emphasis on individual religious experience over institutional teaching, authority, discipline, obedience, the super-individual, and other hallmarks of traditional and institutional religion. In postmodern religion, 'spiritual experience' is more important than belief, just as 'what works for me' is more important than dogma or truth.[17]

With its denial of all absolutes, postmodernism does away with the objectively existing God and replaces it with the idea of God as something created, altered and renewed in various formal interactions between human beings. People do want a personal relationship with God but they also want an easier, faster, no-fuss, microwavable God. Thus it prepares the ground for the popular postmodern contention that the religious home should no longer be the study and justification of belief in a personal God but the critical engagement with religious 'practices.'[18] A postmodern worldview has diminished the need for the reassurance that religion traditionally provided. This worldview

15 Nikolai G. Wenzel, "Postmodernism and Religion," in Peter B. Clarke (Ed.,) *The Oxford Handbook of The Sociology of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 178.

16 Langley, "A Spiritual Land with Little Time for Church," *Daily Telegraph* (17 Dec, 1999), 31.

17 Nikolai G. Wenzel, "Postmodernism and Religion," 179.

18 Schweitzer, *The Postmodern Life Cycle: Challenges for Church and Theology* (Chalice: St Louis, MO, 2004), 4.

brings about a declining acceptance of rigid religious norms and a diminishing need for absolute rules.[19] Religious thinkers, at least in the West, have been increasingly free to explore religious ideas more creatively than was usually possible in the past; this can be viewed as one aspect of an ongoing process of detraditionalization.[20] A common claim is that, in the 'postmodern' environment, religion no longer presents itself as pre-packaged as it has been done in the previous eras.

In the past, all of people's ideas about reality and objectivity depended ultimately upon the authority of a deeply ingrained sense of religious law, and proximately upon a framework of shared philosophical assumptions. In modernity these assumptions especially concerned the human subject, consciousness, experience, reason, and language; but in postmodern times they are all broken down. Metaphysical realism has come to an end, and our whole world-view has become very much more pluralized, pragmatic, free-floating, and maintained by continual improvisation. In theological terms, this adds up to the Death of God, the Disappearance of the Self, the End of History, and the Closure of the Book; the end therefore of all forms of realism and supernaturalism; the end of objective Truth, and of all forms of faith in some future and hoped-for totalization of the human world.[21]

Religious ideas and practices have been prone to becoming 'free-floating' in postmodernity because in many cases they are no longer tied to religious traditions practised in particular locales, but have rather become de-localised. An individual might, for example, adopt the inevitability of the practises and beliefs of Christianity without attaching himself/herself to any particular Christian denomination or without joining a local Christian community. Not only have religious traditions, in many cases, become de-localised, they have also become increasingly de-personalised. In other words, a growing number of

19 Inglehart, 'Globalization and Postmodern Values,' *The Washington Quarterly* 23 (1), (2000), 224.

20 Victoria Harrison, "Postmodern Thought and Religion: Open-Traditionalism and Radical Orthodoxy on Religious Belief and Experience," *The Heythrop Journal* (2009), 964.

21 Ref. Don Cupitt, *Mysticism after Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 1.

people are dependent upon a local religious leader with whom they have a personal relationship for guidance in matters pertaining to religious belief and practice. The deregulation of the religious realm, combined with the cultural emphasis on freedom and choice, results in intermingled, interfused, forms of religious—or 'religious'-cum-'secular'—life which exists beyond the tradition-regulated church and chapel. People no longer feel obliged to heed the boundaries of the religions of modernity. Instead, they are positively encouraged to exercise their 'autonomy' to draw on what has diffused through the culture.[22]

Moreover, another characteristic of postmodern religion is the separation of religious experience from religious belief—two elements that modern thought had striven to keep firmly united. This results in a form of relativism as religion beyond belief is religion where 'truth' is relative to what one takes to be involved in satisfying one's requirements. It is perhaps the disjunction between religious experience and religious belief that is quintessential to much of religious thought in postmodernity. By the end of the twentieth century, many different voices argued that religious experience can withstand a loss of confidence in traditional religious beliefs. Religion, the argument goes, is a way of life that offers a distinctive way of experiencing reality; and, as such, it does not require an intellectual edifice to support it.[23]

If religion is to be meaningful in postmodernity, each person must arrive at a personal and highly subjective understanding of it. People can no longer be expected simply to accept purportedly objective religious 'truths' that are handed down by their traditions. Once believers realise that their religious beliefs are without foundation in supernatural facts, but are instead the product of human beings like themselves, they can learn to appreciate religion for what it genuinely is. Religion has to be human; it cannot be otherwise, for it would not

22 Paul Heelas, 'Introduction: On Differentiation and Dedifferentiation' in *Religion, Modernity and Postmodernity*, ed., Paul Heelas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 5.

23 Ibid.

work as religion unless it were simply human.[24] Postmodernism holds that a traditional conception of God as an omnipotent, omniscient, omni-benevolent being that exists independently of the world can have no place. The description of deepening 'religious home' with the help of postmodernism demands that we need to be enlightened by thinkers of that sort. Here we get the assistance from Emmanuel Levinas, a staunch postmodern philosopher of religion.

6. 'Religious Home' in Emmanuel Levinas

Emmanuel Levinas[25] contends that religion is not theology understood in a traditional sense but is, rather, responsibility to the point of expiation for the other. He prefers the term religion to theology when describing the relation with the other. Religion is proposed as the bond that is established between the Same and the Other without constituting a totality. He proposes the reason for preferring the term religion to theology. Unlike theology, religion would escape the totalization which defines thought as violence; whereas theology thematizes God and therefore approaches God that it has itself conceived.[26] Thus Levinas' use of the term, 'religion,' means the humanistic ethics of the other person, an ethical suspension and reduction of the theological. In choosing the term religion without pronouncing the word God or sacred, Levinas had in mind the meaning which Auguste Comte gives to this term in the beginning of his *System of Positive Polity*.[27] Religion is the relation with a being as a being. It does not consist in conception, in assimilation or in comprehension of being but in letting be.

24 Ref. Don Cupitt, *The Sea of Faith: Christianity in Change* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1984), 19.

25 Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) is the Lithuanian-born French Jewish philosopher. He is also widely recognised as one of the most important Continental philosophers of the twentieth century. A pupil of Husserl and Heidegger, Levinas pioneered new forms of religion with his postmodern readings.

26 Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans., Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2001), 40.

27 Auguste Comte (1798-1857) is the French philosopher and Social Theorist. To him, religion is a synthesis of 'dogma' which represents the philosophical unity of scientific theories; 'worship' which directs sentiments and 'regulations' which govern behaviour. Cf. A. Comte, *System of Positive Polity*, trans., J.H. Bridges and F. Harrison (New York: Burt & Franklin, 1966).

Levinas adopts an adult religion in his philosophical analysis. A truly adult religion offers an alternative perspective that is attentive to the transcendent through morality and justice. If an adult religion is to coincide with spiritual life, it must be essentially ethical. Levinas contends that spiritualizing a religion does not consist in judging one's experiences in the light of the scientific results of the day, but in understanding these very experiences as links between intelligences as situated in the full light of consciousness and discourse.[28] Thus the realm of an adult religion is neither belief, nor dogmatics, but event, passion, and intense activity.

An adult religion, in spite of its ethical nature, is bound to undergo crisis today. Levinas speaks of two kinds of religious crises. The first kind of religious crisis in contemporary spiritual life arises from the awareness that society goes beyond love. This love is the love of one's neighbour determined by proximity. When a third party who is wounded listens to the amorous dialogue, he/she considers that the society of love is going in the wrong direction. The lack of universality here is not due to a lack of generosity, but is due to the intimate essence of love. Hence love which does not become judgment and justice becomes the love of a closed society.[29] The second kind of religious crisis results from the impossibility of isolating oneself with God and forgetting all those who remain outside the affectionate dialogue. These kinds of religious crises are easily overcome when a religion is at its zenith in the ethical movement towards the other person. It is possible that when the very proximity of God is inseparable from the ethical transformation of the social, and notably and more specifically that it does not coincide with the disappearance of servitude and domination in the very structure of the social phenomenon.[30]

An adult religion devoid of its crisis forms an intrinsic religious identity with its home nature. The intrinsic religious identity rests on

28 Emmanuel Levinas, *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism,* trans., Seán Hand (London: The Athlone Press, 1990), 7.

29 Emmanuel Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans., Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987), 32.

30 Emmanuel Levinas, *Beyond the Verse Talmudic Readings and Lectures,* trans., Gary D. Mole (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, and London: The Athlone Press, 1994), 5.

an intellectual and reflective appropriation of the confession of faith and the message bound up with it. Levinas refers with vigour to all religions that the ethical responsibility for one another is the truest and the highest Revelation of God. It is the religious identity and it must always have priority over every other truth and every other revelation embraced by any religion. Religion is responsibility if it is anything at all. Levinas explains his use of the term 'religious identity' as follows:

> I do not want to define anything through God because it is the human that I know. It is God that I can define through human relations and not the inverse. The notion of God, God knows, I am not opposed to it! But when I have to say something about God, it is always beginning from human relations. The inadmissible abstraction is God; it is in terms of the relation with the Other (*Autrui*) that I speak of God. I do not refuse religious terms and identity, but I adopt them in order to designate the situation where the subject exists in the impossibility of hiding itself. I do not start from the existence of a very great and all-powerful being. Everything I wish to say comes from this situation of responsibility which is religious insofar as that I cannot elude it. You find yourself before a responsibility from which you cannot steal away.[31]

Instead of introducing religion as an ascent of the individual soul to God, he approaches it through human proximity and justice. For Levinas, religion is, in short, the metaphysical relationship with the Other, which is based on respect and mutual aid even beyond need, submission and generosity. This is the original religious identity needed very much today.

7. Gandhian Spirit of Religion in Line with Postmodernism

Dr. A. Pushparajan, the icon of this *Festschrift*, has in many ways portrayed the Gandhian conception of Religion in the spirit of postmodernism as well. His writings were mostly context-oriented and occasion-oriented as postmodernism promotes contextualization in thinking and expressing. He has been picturing Gandhi as believer

31 Emmanuel Levinas, "Transcendence and Height," in *Emmanuel Levinas*: *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed., A. Peperzak, S. Critchley, and R. Bernasconi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 29.

in a personal God of his traditional religion and also as believer of other religions with his outlook of interreligious character. As postmodernism claims, with his own truth-claims about God, Gandhi could relate himself with others who had contradictory truth claims. The ritualistic aspects of religion did not appeal to Gandhi's life as he illustrates trans-religious approach to religious home. It means living one's religion in a non-sectarian way, beyond the formulations of cult, code and creed.[32]

Along with the study of his native religion, Gandhi also diligently learned about other great religions and made a deeper research into the truth of religions. It was as a result of his deep study and prayerful search that he came to certain understanding of God in a purely trans-religious way. Gandhi's search was very practical as he was trying to put into practice whatever he knew to be truth. As postmodernism recommends, Gandhi was always ready to change his life-style in consistency with the new light he got in search. He was keen to make his life fall in line with the newer rays of truth he was getting.[33]

Dr Pushparajan's description of Gandhi's trans-religious formulation of God as Truth is sharing the rhythm of postmodernism. He enumerates that the biographical sketch of Gandhi's whole life was a powerful illustration of a spiritual search, pursued in a trans-religious way. Dr Pushparajan believes that Gandhi was born a Vaishnavite Hindu and died as a Hindu, yet he could easily commune with non-Hindus and collaborate with them all. As postmodernism staunchly promotes, Gandhi has evolved a trans-religious understanding of God and formulated it as Truth. The varied religions need not combat with one another just because they hold contradictory truths and claims. Rather plurality of religions is not merely something to be tolerated but to be accepted as really necessary for humanity, given the varied cultural, historic, and climatic factors. They can also relate themselves positively with one another.[34]

32 A. Pushparajan, "Gandhi's Trans-Religious Concept of God," in *Romancing the Sacred? Towards an Indian Christian Philosophy of Religion*, ed., George Karuvelil (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2007), 377.

33 Ibid., 384.

34 Ibid., 403.

Conclusion

It is good to note that postmodernism helps religious home to become more acceptable and viable without adherence to structured, rigid, formal and orthodox system. God can be conceived in the spirit of postmodernism and Gandhian view as personal and relational. Thus varied religions can be brought to fulfillment and excellence rather than rejecting anything that was vital in them. We know that the sectarian and narrow ways of understanding God by religions in the past have created hatred among religions. They have promoted bigotry among believers and more harm to humankind. To that extent, religions have been instrumental in the denial of God as well. It is very clear that modernization and secularization, postmodernism, fundamentalism and the struggles and questions associated with them, exist in all of the world's religions. The various instances of fanaticism, usually accompanied by violence, continue throughout the world with unceasing regularity. Whether the struggles occur among Sikhs, Muslims, Hindus or between Christians and Hindus, there are examples to remind the public that fundamentalism and its ramifications are an ongoing phenomenon. Combating these religious conflicts is a need of the day. Hence, postmodern and Gandhi's understanding of religion is sure to promote communal harmony among the people, greater commitment to combined service, committed sacrifice and concrete exemplification of God on earth. Thus religion is a comfortable phenomenon creating home-based atmosphere everywhere.

GANDHIAN VISION OF RELIGION AS ONE'S HOME
Its Implications for Our Times

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Abstract: *Religion as one's home is very ambivalent. Though the symbol 'home' evokes a sense of security, relative freedom to be oneself, inter-dependence and inter-relationship, it can also communicate divisions, discriminations, power-structures power-struggle etc.* In fact, Gandhi's view of religion as a home can explain his own relationship with his religion, his attitude towards other religions and his integration of religious values with political ideals. *Though Gandhi's thoughts on religions transcended the boundaries of religions, his religious home was Hinduism. The basic Vedic openness to all manifestations or revelations of the Truth was an integral part of Gandhi's religious home and his religious attitude. Yet, surprisingly, Gandhi could not make a distinction between Hinduism as a pure religion and a socio-cultural reality. Gandhi claimed to have knowledge of other religions, studied and also received inspiration from the scriptures of other religions, but he remained in the home of his Hindu religion. For him, following his religious tradition was probably a liberative experience because of the position of his family in the society but he would not have known the agony of a human being who was treated worse than an animal because s/he was born in the family of those whom the Hindu religious traditions considered as untouchables. With all his good will and attempts to improve the lot of the untouchables, he could not change the socio-religious attitude of his co-religionists towards the so called untouchables. Religion as a home can also be oppressive if the members of the religious home are not self-critical about their religion.*

Religions are only temporary homes and human beings become truly human when they become homeless to have God as their home. Our experiment with truth must lead us beyond Gandhi to experience God in spirit and in truth, the true home of any seeker after truth!

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Employing the symbol, *home*[1] for one's religion evokes a number of images and associated ideas in one's mind about one's relationship to one's religion. Home is the symbol of a *situation* of security, acceptance, relationship of communion and freedom to be oneself. When it is applied to the religion one adheres to, then the symbol of home assumes an all-embracing and all-encompassing meaning. Then the symbol, home, mediates the meaning of relationship between the Absolute and the relative, the Infinite and the finite, heaven and the earth, the temporal and the eternal. Any God-encounter is making a home in God or abiding in God (cf., John 15: 1-11). Religion as one's home offers him/her inner spiritual security and peace, harmony and tranquility and the hope for a better life hereafter. In this sense, the religion one follows is liberative. However, the home that is the symbol of security and freedom can become a symbol of insecurity, unfreedom, false pride, prejudices, exclusivism and separation. It is the positive meaning of the symbol, *home*, that we infer when we use this symbol for religion and discuss the Gandhian vision of religion. In fact, Gandhi's view of religion as a home can explain his own relationship with his religion, his attitude towards other religions and his integration of religious values with political ideals.

In this paper an attempt is made to understand the insights of Gandhi on religion as one's home and its implications for inter-religious relationship and societal transformation. The positive understanding of the religion one follows as one's own *home* can be liberating and life-enhancing. But a narrow understanding of this symbol can promote intolerance, bigotry and fundamentalism. Gandhi seemed to

1 Dr A. Pushparajan has written about the importance of *home,* both real and symbolic, in one's life. In fact, he had prepared a para-liturgical ceremony for the blessing and entering into a new home. Cf., "Inculturation in Para-liturgical Celebrations," *Journal of Indian Theology,* Vol. IX, No 1 (Jan-April, 2016), 59-83.

have followed the middle-path, focusing more on political liberation than on religious liberation through a reformation.

1. Gandhi's Religious Home: Hindu Orthodoxy

It is true that like any good Hindu, Gandhi had integrated the humanizing and liberating values of other religions into his own religious convictions. His interaction with the people of other religions was so deep that he made efforts to read and assimilate the Holy Scriptures of other religions. In his interactions with the people in England and in South Africa, probably he might have been perceived by many as a person who synthesized in his religious vision and conviction the noble thoughts of other religions. This is evident from the witness of his first biographer J.J. Doke in 1909 that it was difficult for people judge which religion Gandhi belonged to.

> A few days ago I was told that "he is a Buddhist." Not long since a Christian newspaper described him as "a Christian Mohemmadan," an extraordinary mixture indeed. Others imagine that he worships idols…I question whether any system of religion can absolutely hold him. His views are too closely allied to Christianity to be entirely Hindu; and too saturated with Hinduism to be called Christian, while his sympathies are so wide and catholic, that one would imagine that he has reached a point where the formulae of sects are meaningless.[2]

Though Gandhi's thoughts on religions transcended the boundaries of religions, his religious home was Hinduism. He was born in a Hindu family and his parents were devout Vaishnavites. According to A. Pushparajan, "Born a Hindu, Gandhi remained a Hindu till the end of his life. He firmly believed that the entire roots of his thinking and behaviour were to be found in the Hindu scriptures. He claimed he had read the *Śāstras* to his satisfaction, and endeavoured ever since his days as a youth to put into practice the fundamental precepts of the *Śāstras*.[3] In an autobiographical statement Gandhi described his religious affiliation thus, "I call myself a Sanatani Hindu because I

2 Cited in Ragavan N. Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 20.

3 A. Pushparajan, "Attitude towards the Scriptures of Other Religions: A Gandhian Model," *Journal of Dharma*, vol VII, No.3 (July-Sept., 1982), 339.

believe in the Vedas, Upanishads, the Puranas, and all that goes by the name Hindu Scriptures."[4] While he was open to the noble teachings of other religions and was inspired by them, he also affirmed his identity as a Hindu.

In his speech during the celebration of the birth anniversary of Buddha on 7th May 1925 Gandhi announced that many Jains, Buddhists, Christians and Mussulmans claim that he belonged to their religions, but he said:

> For me, however, I regard myself as one of the humblest of Hindus but the deeper I study Hinduism, the stronger becomes the belief in me that Hinduism is as broad as the Universe and it takes in its fold all that is good in this world. And so I find that with the Mussulmans I can appreciate the beauties of Islam and sing its praises. And so simultaneously with the professors of other religions, and still something within me tells that, for all that deep veneration I show to these several religions, I am still all the more a Hindu, none the less for it.[5]

The religious formation that Gandhi received from his parents especially from his mother had a lasting impact on his life. He writes, "….The outstanding impression my mother has left on my memory is that of saintliness. She was deeply religious. She would not think of taking meals without her daily prayers. Going to *Haveli*—the *Vaishnava* Temple—was one of her daily duties. As far as memory can go back, I do not remember her having ever missed the *Chaturmas* (the vow of fasting). She would take the hardest vows and keep them without flinching."[6] Following her example Gandhi remained a devout orthodox Hindu with total openness to the scriptures and the teaching of other religions integrating them into his Hindu faith. He says, "My respectful study of other religions has not abated my reverence for my faith or my faith in the Hindu Scriptures. They have enabled me to understand more clearly many an obscure passage in the Hindu

4 *Young India,* (6.10.1921), 317; See, A Pushparajan, ibid., 339.

5 K. Swaminathan and C.N. Patel, *"A Gandhi Reader* (Madras: Orient Longman Ltd., 1988), 72.

6 M.K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiment with Truth* (Allahabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1927), 2.

scriptures."[7] Further he says, "I do not believe in the exclusive divinity of the Vedas, I believe in the Bible, the Koran, and the Zend Avesta to be as much divinely inspired as the Vedas."[8]

Gandhi's Hindu religiosity enabled him to remain open to the revelations of God in other religious traditions without jettisoning any elements of his Hindu faith. Hinduism was his *home* which he adorned with the humanizing teachings of other religions. Being a Hindu influenced by the Vedas, the fundamental Rig Vedic view, '*ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti*' (the Truth is one: sages speak of it differently) might have had a real impact on his attitude towards other religions. He embraced every religion without in anyway being a less Hindu. He believed that "Revelation (Truth) is the exclusive property of no nation, no tribes,"[9] and further he says, "Truth or Revelation is present in every religion because they all are based on common fundamentals, they all have produced great saints."[10] A. Pushparajan, a great scholar in Gandhian studies, observes thus about Gandhi's understanding of religion: "The essence of religion for Gandhi consists not so much in beliefs, doctrines, rituals or other practices—even though all these are necessary constituents in the making of a religion—as in the life produced by those constituents."[11] Gandhi's convictions about religion fit in well with his understanding of Hinduism. No wonder then, he was proud of affirming his identity as a Hindu. He had integrated this Hindu religion of his understanding into his life. "You must watch my life," he said, "how I live, eat, sit, talk, behave in general. The sum total of all those in me is my religion."[12] True to the spiritual heritage of India Gandhi does not separate religious belief and practices from the other aspects of life. Everything is permeated with the presence of the Divine and therefore, everything is significant for one's experiment with the truth about oneself, others, nature and God. Therefore, it is

7 *Young India,* (2.9.1926), 308.

8 *Young India,* (6.10.1921), 317; See A Pushparajan, ibid., 340.

9 *Young India,* (25.8.1924), cited in A.Pushparajan, "Attitude towards the Scriptures of Other Religions: A Gandhian Model," 341.

10 *Young India,* (22.12.1927), cited in A.Pushparajan, "Attitude towards the Scriptures of Other Religions: A Gandhian Model," 341.

11 Ibid.

12 *Harijan*, (22.9.1946), 321.

by remaining in the heart of Hinduism that Gandhi made experiments with Truth. He seemed to believe that by becoming a better Hindu he becomes also identified with the followers of religions other than Hinduism.

2. Religion as One's Home: A Positive Symbol

Home is the symbol of security, identity and relationships. Leaving the security of the mother's womb, the human being needs the security of relationships as well as food, clothing and shelter. It is at home one learns the basics of culture and religion as well as the division between 'we' and 'they,' 'dos' and 'don'ts.' Home provides a certain freedom to be oneself. Home can lead a person to grow into maturity and contribute something positive to the world into which one is born. When the symbol of home is applied to the religion one follows, it will give some new insights into one's relationship to one's religion, its positive impact on his or her life, giving right focus and directions to life.

As the home into which one is born provides security and space for a person to unfold himself or herself, the religion into which one is born attempts to provide meaning for one's existence in this world and for life beyond this world. In human's search for the origin and the end of human existence the religion which one follows and lives, gives him or her some meaningful answers in the context of that particular religion. This can be applied to Gandhi's understanding and living of his religion to the maximum possible way. Hinduism was his home even when he was at home with other religions.

While he revered the Scriptures of other religions like the Bible and the Koran, he was passionately in love with Bhagavad Gita. He considered it as his mother and sought her solace in distress. He found Gita as "the quintessence of all the Śāstras and the Upanishads."[13] Yet he was certain that the 'Sermon on the Mount' in the gospel according to Matthew in the New Testament would be sufficient for him to have God-experience if Gita were not to be there. Gandhi's acceptance of his religion as his home allowed him to enter into the essence of the

13 *Harijan,* (24.8.1934), 221.

Hindu way of life which has open doors and the windows for the noble thoughts of every religion and ideology to enter in. According to the Ṛg Veda*, ā no bhadrāḥ kratavo yantu viśvataḥ,*[14] which means, "Let noble thoughts come to us from everywhere." This basic Vedic openness to all manifestations or revelations of the Truth which is the inexhaustible Mystery was an integral part of Gandhi's religious home and his religious attitude. His religion as his home gave him security, peace and harmony as well as a sound foundation for his holding on to Truth, *Satyagraha,* come what may.

3. Religion as One's Home: A Negative Symbol

It is universally accepted that in an atmosphere of love, care, security and recognition provided by one's home or family one realizes one's identity. However, depending on the customs and rules of kinship with numerous 'dos' and 'don'ts' to protect the 'prestige and good-name' of a family, the families can also set blocks and boundaries, preventing the unfolding of their members. Theodore Zedlin in his book, *An Intimate History of Humanity*, says: "The family has, ideally, been the place where people have been generous to one another, but at the same time, as a unit, it has usually placed its own interests before those of others and been merciless to those of its members who failed to fulfill their obligations to it."[15] A home or a family is a miniature society. It gives an identity to a person, but often a false identity dictated by the concerns of those unquestioned traditions and corrupted customs preventing the evolution of the human spirit. Loyalty to one's home can make a person blind or at least pretend to be blind to the inhuman and unhealthy attitudes that a home provides for the members of the household. From all his writings and his talks we can easily understand that Gandhi was not limited by the Hindu religion which was his religious home.

Home as a symbol for religion has its own limitations. In the Semitic religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam, symbolizing one's own religion as one's home would invariably lead to one's understanding

14 *Ṛgveda* 1.89.1.

15 T. Zeldin, *An Intimate History of Humanity* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1999), 314.

of one's identity in opposition to the other. Therefore, the question of affirming the uniqueness and exclusiveness of one's 'home religion' arises. It ends up by each claiming its own uniqueness and its superiority over others. Since Hinduism is not an organized religion with well defined dogmas and a central authority to govern the community of the believers, the meaning of the symbol 'home' for the religious community can be expanded and made inclusive. In fact, Gandhi had done so. His experience of Hinduism as his home let him include and integrate the religious truths of other religions and their Scriptures.

To experience a harmonious life in one's home one has to make a lot of sacrifices because one has to sometimes accept unjust and discriminating power structures, stubborn adherence to certain irrelevant and meaningless traditions and practices, prejudices and fears within one's home. When religion is experienced as one's home the same type of tolerance to the unjust and discriminatory structures are shown without prophetically challenging such a situation or questioning the religious texts that command or justify such evils. It is true that Gandhi transcended his home religion Hinduism exemplifying in his own life the fundamental Hindu attitude of tolerance. However, Gandhi could not see or pretended that he did not see the terrible caste discrimination of human beings sanctioned by the Hindu religion. He saw the misery of the untouchables and dedicated his life for the betterment of their lives, naming them as *Harijans* or God's people and started a journal with the name '*Harijan*.' Probably it was to give the untouchables a respectable name that he called them *Harijans*, but eventually it became a pejorative and discriminatory word for the marginalized untouchables. Gandhi never challenged the *varṇāśrama* system of dividing the society into a hierarchical structure of the four castes and their sub-castes with a large number of people outside the caste-order and considered untouchables. They were condemned to a life of perpetual discrimination because the caste or castelessness is assigned from birth. While social discrimination is justified and enforced presenting it as a law coming from God, the Ultimate, through some mediators, then religion becomes a means of oppression and enslavement; it is no more liberative. This needs to be challenged and reformed.

It is doubtful whether Gandhi envisioned a casteless Hinduism where all are treated equally as human beings without any discrimination whatsoever. It looks as though he believed that the caste system is integral to Hinduism or it is constitutive of it. Without the caste system, Hinduism would cease to be Hinduism. But then, the caste system that seems essential to Hinduism is discriminatory. How could an enlightened person like Gandhi live with this contradiction! Dr Ambedkar was a constant challenge to Gandhi's home religion of Hinduism which is built on the pillars of caste-hierarchy and discrimination. Gandhi would have certainly known this terrible contradiction he had to live with but he would not leave his home, or would not do allow anything to disturb the existing Hindu social structure. It is true that Gandhi had overcome the upper caste attitudes and treated others as humans. He might have thought all Hindus would overcome their prejudices and discriminatory attitudes towards the dominated castes and the outcastes in the course of time. His immediate and overriding concern was to liberate India from the British rule.

The caste discrimination and such evil practices were thought to be an internal matter of the Hindu society and Gandhi might have thought that once freedom was attained those matters would eventually vanish and India would be a free society living the noble values of all the cultures and the religions of the world. Either Gandhi failed to understand the seriousness of the caste discrimination which had been practised as a religio-cultural and social slavery for centuries justified by *Manusmṛti*, or he ignored it for the sake of India's political freedom. His being at home in the Hindu religion, probably, prevented him from seeing the evil of the perverse caste-system that discriminates humans on the basis of their birth in a family to which the society had already assigned an identity as untouchables. Basking in the security and the comfort that one's religion provides, one may overlook the failures of one's religion to respond to the human rights violations either in its teachings or in its practices. One needs to be self-critical about one's own religion to see whether it is enhancing human unfolding as humans or not. Loyalty to one's religion means also to challenge it prophetically to live its original mission when it takes enslaving orientations or promotes such false beliefs.

Gandhi's objection to the conversion of some persons from one religion to another and his opposition to the missionaries or evangelists was stemming from his understanding of Hinduism as his religious home. One is born a Hindu in a Hindu family or home. There is no dichotomy between the real home and the religious home. One melts into the other. Therefore, religion as a home is part of the reality of someone born Hindu. When one's religion is understood and lived as one's home it is impossible to think that any conversion is possible. You are a part of the religion into which you are born because you are born in a particular family at a particular place and time; that is one's givenness. Therefore, one cannot change from one religion to another. Gandhi could not make a distinction between Hinduism as a pure religion and a socio-cultural reality. Probably Gandhi did not have the Christic experience of Brahmabandho Upadhyaya (1861-1907) that he made a distinction between *sadhan dharma* and *samaj dharma*. According to Upadhyaya he could remain a Hindu according to the *samaj dharma* or the law of the Hindu society but in faith he was committed to Jesus Christ and a member of the Catholic Church. For Upadhyaya religion was home within one's home or a sanctuary so that one could be a Hindu socially and culturally but a Catholic because of the Christic faith and baptism. So for Upadhyaya, conversion from Hindu religion to Christian religion was not only possible but also necessary for the regeneration of India. So religion as a home can make restrictions on the movement of the human heart and mind to go beyond religion. In fact, once Gandhi remarked about such a transcending of religion. He says, "Religion is dear to me, and my first complaint is that India is becoming irreligious. Here I am not thinking of the Hindu or the Muhammedan or the Zoroastrian religion but of that religion which underlies all religions. We are running away from God."[16] He knew for certain that God was beyond or beneath all religions. Yet, Gandhi was comfortable within the home of his own Hindu religion and made attempts to integrate the God-experiences of other religions into his inherited Hindu vision of the Ultimate Reality.

16 M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1938), 38, as cited in Lawrence Pius Dorairaj, *Hind Swaraj: Gandhi's Critique of Modern Civilization* (Bengaluru, ATC Publications, 2015), 174.

4. Homeless Home: The Paradox of Religion as One's Home

Religions in general provide humans the possibility of God-encounter. And the role of religion is a mediating one. All religions are soteriological as they offer ways of liberation from this world of misery and misfortune. The innate quest for meaning finds some satisfaction in the religion one is born into and/or has chosen, and it becomes a home for a believer. In fact, all religions claim to assure God-experience and a meaningful life here on earth and a life hereafter. If the God-experience mediated through the religion is such a transforming one, it is clear that such a person does not need the security of any religion including the one into which one is born or one chose to remain. In every religion the sacraments, rituals, prayers etc., are seen only as a means to deepen the God-experience that gives meaning to one's human existence.

When one transcends religion and becomes homeless, then that person will have God as his or her home. John, the Evangelist, who uses the symbol of *home* to indicate the intimate relationship between Jesus and his Father as well as between Jesus and his disciples, expresses this in Jesus' teaching about the vine and the branches. "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love" (Jn 15:7-9). The Greek word, *menein* to abide, to remain or to make home with, is used to express the relationship between the Lord and his disciples. When one makes home with God, religion fulfills its mediating function and is no more needed and the person who belonged to a religion becomes homeless! It is in losing this home of religion that one gains the eternal home of God's presence! But as long as humans are on a pilgrimage to the eternal home, religions provide a temporary home. But this temporary home can also enslave the believer instead of bringing liberation. Even an enlightened one like Gandhi could not liberate himself from his home of Hindu religion even when he was open, respectful and receptive to the teachings of other religions. In the multi-religious society of India, true spiritual transformation can be brought about

only by those who have transcended their religion and have become 'homeless' to remain at home with God, oneself, others and nature.

Conclusion

Religion as one's home is very ambivalent. Though the symbol 'home' evokes a sense of security, relative freedom to be oneself, inter-dependence and inter-relationship, it can also communicate divisions, discriminations, power-structures, power-struggle, etc. Thus the religion one follows positively considered as a home can give certain inner security about the meaning of human existence and its destiny. One can also organize one's life accordingly. However, it can create also a false identity, exclusivism, superiority over other religions and be a smoke screen to hide the dehumanizing elements within one's religious home. Gandhi claimed to have knowledge of other religions, studied and also received inspiration from the scriptures of other religions, but he remained in the home of his Hindu religion. For him, following his religious tradition was probably a liberative experience because of the position of his family in the society, but he would not have known the agony of a human being who was treated worse than an animal because s/he was born in the family of those whom the Hindu religious traditions considered as untouchables. With all his good will and attempts to improve the lot of the untouchables, he could not change the socio-religious attitude of his co-religionists towards the so called untouchables. Religion as a home can also be oppressive if the members of the religious home are not self-critical about their religion. Religions are only temporary homes and human beings become truly human when they become *homeless* to have God as their home. Our Experiment with Truth must lead us beyond Gandhi to experience God in spirit and in truth, the true home of any seeker after truth!

GANDHIAN PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

Gharwapasi and Its Effects on Community in India

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Abstract: *'Religious conversions' is a hotly debated topic in India, today. The debate around 'conversions' assumes greater significance in the context of Hindu fundamentalist forces that claim that India is exclusively a 'Hindu Rashtra' and can rightly be called 'home' only for those who are Hindus. To achieve the aims of this Rashtra, many associations of the Sangh Parivar (conglomerate of Hindu fundamentalist forces) have been performing what is commonly called gharwapasi (literally, 'homecoming') ceremonies accompanied by 'shuddhikaran' (purification rites) on those who are allegedly 'Hindus' and have been forcibly converted to Christianity and Islam. The article examines the validity and value of gharwapasi in the light of Mahatma Gandhi's views on religious conversions. Beginning with highlighting the contentious issue of conversions and clarifying the main terms used, the article discusses Gandhi's views on conversions in four realms—personal, cultural, sociopolitical and religious. Then, against the backdrop of Gandhi's views, it assesses the motives and methods of those indulging in gharwapasi activities. Finally, it very briefly reiterates some guidelines that Gandhians like Prof. Pushparajan have offered in order to inspire Indian Christians and Indian Church to more meaningfully contribute to the collaborative enterprise of community-building in India.*

1. Introduction: Engaging in the Conversion Debate

Some words have become very controversial in current sociopolitical discourses in India. Mere mention of these words—like missionary, conversions, nationalism, patriotism and *gharwapasi*—evokes strong emotions and triggers fierce argumentation. When such arguments arise, people seek substantiation from famous figures of the past who have held opinions that are influential even today. One such icon whose views are aired regularly is Mahatma Gandhi. Though one might disagree with some of Gandhi's views, no one will question his moral integrity and the power he wields over millions. Hence, this paper will focus on Gandhi's views on conversions.

The purpose of my focus on Gandhi's views on conversions is twofold: first, I feel honoured to share a few of my thoughts in this Festschrift to felicitate an eminent Indian scholar and friend, Prof. A. Pushparajan, who harmonizes Christian values and Gandhian principles in his personal life and in his teachings and writings. As a philosopher and theologian, Prof. Pushparajan has devoted many decades to proclaim the gospel of Christ by bringing it to dialogue with other creeds, cultures and disciplines, uppermost among which is Gandhian thought. Second, being a Jesuit of the Gujarat Province, I have been reflecting and writing on issues of missionary activity, church, community and conversion in the context of many conflicts that have arisen in Gujarat due to alleged 'forced conversions' over the past two decades.[1] The national 'debate on religious conversions'—that was first formally announced by the former Prime Minister of India, A. B. Vajpayee in January 1999—opened the Pandora's Box for heated debates on the issue.[2]

1 See my "Debating Conversions," *Indian Currents* 11/6 (Feb. 8-14, 1999): 35-6; "Tribals Totter under Trishul Terrorism," *Indian Currents* 9/49 (Dec. 7-13, 1998): 21-4; "Attacks on Christians Orchestrated" *Indian Currents* 11/15 (April 12-18, 1999): 37-9; "New Light on the Dangs: Citizen's Report," *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theology* 63/5 (May 1999): 385-9; "Grisly Christmas for Christians in Gujarat," *Communalism Combat* 6/50 (January 1999): 11-4; "Saffron Shrouds YKJ 2000 in Gujarat," *Communalism Combat* 7/55 (Jan. 2000): 15-7, among others.

2 This announcement was made by A.B. Vajpayee in the aftermath of his visit to the Dangs District in South Gujarat after many incidents of violence broke out—allegedly on account of 'forced conversions' of adivasis to Christianity.

This article will discuss some aspects of the conversion debate with a focus on *gharwapasi* and its impact on the formation of community in India. First, I will clarify the meaning of the main terms of our discussion, namely, conversions, *gharwapasi* and community. Second, I shall highlight some Gandhian perspectives on the issue of religious conversions. Third, borrowing insights from Prof. Pushparajan's writings on Gandhi's spiritual and religious legacy,[3] I shall discuss the issue with focus on what is currently happening in India. Finally, to conclude, I shall suggest sketchy guidelines that both Mahatma Gandhi and Prof. Pushparajan seem to offer to Indian Christians and Indian churches, today.

2. Clarification of Terms

2.1. Conversion

Conversion is a most widely used and abused word in discussing religion today. In the Judeo-Christian tradition 'to be converted' simply means to undergo a change of direction. While the term is rarely used in the Bible, stories of conversion are prominent.[4] For instance, in the First Testament, Jacob's life is totally transformed after wrestling with an angel (Gen 32:22-32) and Abraham leaves his paternal home and converts from his ancestral religion with a new ritual of circumcision signifying change (Gen 17). Besides individual conversions, there are group conversions. The people of Nineveh repent of their evil at Jonah's warning (Jon 3), and King Darius of Persia, convinced by Daniel's miraculous survival in the lions' den, commands all in his kingdom to worship "the living God," whose "dominion will be forever" (Dan 6:26).

3 Among Prof. Pushparajan's many writings on Gandhian thought are the following, which I shall refer to in this article: "Gandhi's Views on Conversion," *Indian Missiological Review* 3/2 (April 1981): 103-7; "Attitude towards the Scriptures of Other Religions: A Gandhian Model," *Journal of Dharma* 7/3 (July-Sept. 1982): 337-51; "Trans-Religious Spirituality of Gandhi," *Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies* 7/2 (July 2004): 29-43; "Gandhi's Trans-Religious Concept of God," *Romancing the Sacred? Towards an Indian Christian Philosophy of Religion*, ed. G. Karuvelil (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2007), 373-403.

4 See Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Illinois and Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, 1998), 163-5, s.v. 'Conversion' for more details.

In the Second Testament, the classic example of a convert is Saul who changes his name to 'Paul' after a mystical encounter with the Lord Jesus (Acts 9:1-22; 22:1-16). Other converts include Zacchaeus, the tax-collector (Lk 19:1-10), the thief on the cross next to Jesus (Lk 23:39-43), Cornelius (Acts 10) and the jailer converted by Paul and Silas (Acts 16:13). In sum, the Bible depicts converts as those who experience a total transformation of their life and embrace a new path, best expressed in the classical passage: "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new (2 Cor 5:17).

Apart from Biblical usage, the word 'conversion' is the cause of much confusion.[5] Indeed, it is personal and communal, private and public, exclusive and inclusive, sudden and gradual, event and process, active and passive, the action of God and simultaneously the action of human beings, brings peace and creates conflict, signifies an end and also marks a beginning, leaves us devastated and transformed.[6] It is not easy to gauge whether a conversion is genuine or not since many factors enter into the process of conversion. For example, although we are dealing with 'religious conversion' there could be psychological, social, political or economic reasons that also influence one's decision to shift allegiance from one religion to another.

To avoid confusion, we shall take conversion to refer to two realities: first, *atmaparivartan* (i.e., a change of heart within the same religious tradition), and second, *dharmantar* (a change involving acceptance of another religion). In the public sphere, conversion is almost always understood in the latter sense, i.e., a change in one's religious belonging. We shall strive to look at conversion issues by assuming that conversions involve at least four dimensions: personal, cultural, sociopolitical and religious.[7] Each of these dimensions is not a

5 See Ebe Sunder Raj, *The Confusion Called Conversion* (Chennai: Bharat Jyoti, 1988) presents the basic arguments against conversions to Christianity and then defends conversions with studied counter arguments.

6 Lewis B. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1993), 176.

7 Rambo, ibid., 7-10, discusses these four components as being essential to all religious conversions. Although he speaks of 'socio' I have used the category of 'sociopolitical.'

watertight compartment and often overlaps with others. Yet, they will assist us to better assess the issue of conversions.

2.2. Gharwapasi

Gharwapasi literally means 'homecoming.' Literature and scripture is replete with homecoming stories of people who return to their native place once again. The Bible has the narratives of Noah who returns to dry land after the flood and Joseph's homecoming and reunion with his brothers in Egypt, requiring an oath that his bones be buried in Palestine. As a people, the Israelites experience a *gharwapasi* after their slavery in Egypt, and later, after the Babylonian exile. With regard to conversion, the most famous story is undoubtedly the *gharwapasi* of the prodigal son who comes home as a result of *atmaparivartan*. Finally, Christian *gharwapasi* has an eschatological dimension with afterlife seen as a homecoming to that "house with many rooms" (Jn 14:1-4) which Jesus promises to his faithful disciples.[8]

In India today *gharwapasi*—often called '*shuddhikaran*' or 'purification'—refers to religious conversion activities organized by associations affiliated to the *Sangh Parivar*: i.e., Hindu groups like the *Vishva Hindu Parishad* (VHP), *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS) and *Dharam Jagran Samiti* (DJS) to convert non-Hindus to Hinduism.[9] Though *gharwapasi* became the subject of heated public discussion towards the end of 2014,[10] it began almost two decades ago after the aforementioned call for a 'national debate on conversions' in January 1999. The basic assumption underlying *gharwapasi* is that all those who got converted to Christianity or Islam were originally 'Hindus' and must therefore undergo ritual purification

8 See Ryken et al., eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 395-6, s.v. 'homecoming, stories of.'

9 "*Ghar Wapsi* continues in Kerala: 58 more embrace Hinduism," *Rediff News* (Dec. 25, 2014); "'Ghar wapsi' only way to end terror says BJP leader," *Hindustan Times* (Dec. 25, 2014); "VHP to hold 'ghar wapsi' for 4,000 Muslims in Ayodhya in January, *Times of India*, (Dec. 24, 2014); "Ghar wapsi to continue till conversions are banned: Adityanath," *The Hindu* (Feb. 24, 2015); "RSS to Facilitate 'Ghar Wapsi' of Goan Catholics," *New Indian Express* (Jan. 4, 2015); "'Ghar Wapsi' Boom in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh," *Deccan Chronicle* (Jan. 4, 2015).

10 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghar_Wapsi. Accessed on June 19, 2016.

(*shuddhikaran*) as sign of their repentance for abandoning their ancestral faith thereby effecting a 'homecoming' (*gharwapasi*) to the fold of their former dharma, Hinduism. This thinking was popularized by the proponents of *Hindutva* (militant Hindu nationalism) like V.D. Savarkar and M.S. Golwalkar.[11] *Gharwapasi* has met with opposition from many quarters for reasons which we shall soon see.

2.3. Community in India

Community in India refers to all Indians who share a 'commonality' at various levels. First, such a commonality could refer to a common geographical area or a shared territory since a group's location in a particular geographical location affects its way of life. Second, community can be formed on the basis of common characteristics, which can either be inherent (race or tribe), or imputed (caste), or imbibed (class). Third, symbols, stories and narratives can also bind individuals into community. Here, the members of a community may live in very different, distant geographical locations (external); yet, the dynamism of symbolic components (internal) may induce in them a sense of community. Thinkers like Anthony P. Cohen argue that it is not helpful to think of community only in territorial-geographical terms since community is basically a symbolic construct, its boundary and defining element being constituted through symbols.[12] This thinking is echoed in the Indian academy by sociologists like Satish Deshpande who argue that India is being communalized and '*Hinduized*' by the Hindutva agenda, which involves large scale deployment of symbols to exert influence over other communities.[13]

11 See V.D. Savarkar, *Hindutva* (Bombay: Veer Savarkar Prakashan, 1969) and M.S. Golwalkar, *WE, or, Our Nationhood Defined* (Nagpur: Bharat Prakashan, 1947) and *Bunch of Thoughts*, 3rd ed. (Bangalore: Sahitya Sindhu Prakashana, 1996), for the tenets of *Hindutva* which differs from 'Hinduism': the dharma of the majority of Indians.

12 See Anthony P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (Chichester: Ellis Horwood Limited and London & New York: Tavistock Publications, 1985), 11-38.

13 See Satish Deshpande, "Hegemonic Spatial Strategies: The Nation-Space and Hindu Communalism in Twentieth-century India," in Community, Gender and Violence: Subaltern Studies XI, ed. P. Chatterjee and P. Jeganathan (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2000), 167-211; also, "Communalizing the Nation-Space: Notes

Our discussion on conversion must take cognizance of this dimension of community to gauge what consists of 'home' and what does not.

3. Highlights of Gandhi's Views on Conversion

Although Gandhi has written much about conversions to Christianity and their effects on Indian society, without entering into details of his views, we shall only stress what is commonly known and forwarded as firm evidence for his supposedly stiff opposition to conversions.[14]

3.1. Personal Considerations

Gandhi's thinking was always moulded by his own personal experiences of life. His encounters with Christians abroad and the Christian colonizers in India were not always pleasant. Many British Christians strove to convert him to Christianity. However, not only did he refuse to do so, but he also detested the 'holier-than-thou' attitude of many Christians and the apparently not-so-pure motives of the missionaries who, according to him, misused economic, political and institutional power to attract poor and naïve Indians in order to increase the number of Christians by aggressive proselytism and fraudulent baptisms.

Gandhi was not averse to individuals being converted in the sense of experiencing inner transformation or *atmaparivartan*. In this case, he felt that there was no need for *dharmantar* or change of religion. Moreover, to ascertain whether an individual had truly experienced deep inner transformation, the convert would have to fulfill certain conditions: (a) ensuring that one was a mature, free person; (b) one should not have been allured to change by means of any force, fear, fraud or material inducement; and, (c) one should have been given the possibility to consider the possibilities for self-purification in one's own religion before any change.[15]

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on Spatial Strategies of Hindutva," Economic and Political Weekly 30 (Dec.16, 1995): 3220-27.

14 See, Pushparajan, "Gandhi's Views on Conversion," Ibid.; R.K. Gupta, "Gandhi on Conversion," *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* 30/2 (April 2003): 263-70; and Mathew Thomas, "A Gandhian Approach to the Problem of Religious Conversion in India," *National Council of Churches Review* 123/8 (Sept. 2003): 553-59.

15 Pushparajan, Ibid., 105.

Gandhi's insistence on personal experience and deep inner transformation must be seen in the light of his personal experiences with Christians who preached the noble ideals of Jesus Christ, but whose lives were far removed from such ideals. Sadly, he would tell C.F. Andrews that he knew of only one Christian: Jesus, and would advise Stanley Jones to "live more like Christ" in order for Christianity to take root in India.[16]

3.2. Cultural Concerns

Gandhi had a great love and respect for all cultures. He felt 'at home' with all Indian cultures and traditions. In this regard he had certain apprehensions about people converting to Christianity. The Christianity he encountered had eclipsed the radical, revolutionary aspects of the life and mission of Jesus, and had got embroiled with power struggles and enchained with institutions of the Western type. It was more a form of 'Christendom' rather than one animated by the essence of Jesus' 'sermon on the mount' which he loved dearly. This was particularly true of the Christianity spread by the missioners who accompanied the colonial powers from England, Portugal and France 'to save souls.' In their zeal for proselytizing, they not only induced conversion for religious purposes but also coerced the converts to abandon their Indian culture and adopt an alien Western culture and lifestyle.

Gandhi—like many Hindus who oppose conversions till today—felt that conversions were a form of cultural imperialism.[17] He characterized modern European civilization as satanic. He felt that western European culture was only nominally Christian and that it was propagating not the gospel of Jesus but irreligion and immorality. In his travels through many parts of India, he noticed that many of those who converted to Christianity began aping Europeans. He disapproved of Indians losing their native culture, changing their manner of dressing and assuming alien names. Those who did so seemed to sever their ties with their fellow citizens.

16 As quoted by M. Thomas, Ibid., 556.
17 Ibid., 556-57.

3.1. Sociopolitical Factors

The impact that Christianity and Christians had on Gandhi is bipolar. On the one hand, he loved Jesus and his vision of God's Kingdom, and was friendly with many Christian missionaries; but, on the other, he was apprehensive about accepting Jesus as divine or saviour of humankind, while also being fiercely critical of missionary methods of *dharmantar*. Gandhi had made a personal option for the poor and was deeply moved that Jesus had preached that God's Kingdom would preferentially belong to the poor. Of his vision for ideal community, he wrote: "I have no desire for the perishable Kingdom of earth; I am striving for the Kingdom of heaven which is spiritual deliverance. For me the road to salvation lies through incessant toil for the service of my country and humanity."[18] His vision of the 'India of my dreams' was based on his conception of *Ram Rajya*, which he described as "one of true democracy," and which "ensures equal rights alike of prince and pauper."[19]

The *Ram Rajya* ideal animated Gandhi's Quit India struggle and other movements of *swaraj, swadeshi* and *sarvodaya* that aimed at strengthening local resources while also coercing the British colonizers to hand over the reins of governance to Indians. He realized that a united India stood the brightest chance of countering the political and economic might of the British Empire. Thus, rather than address issues of caste conflict, which seemed to fragment Indian society, he endorsed the caste system in its pristine purity and opposed conversions with the argument that these would create fissures and factions among the polity leading to a weakening of the resolve to fight the British. Notably, while he opposed conversions to Christianity, he also opposed Tabligh conversions to Islam, and the '*shuddhi* movement' of some Hindu groups.[20]

18 Quoted by K.L. Seshagiri Rao, "Conversion: a Hindu/Gandhian Perspective," *Religious Conversion: Contemporary Practices & Controversies*, ed. C. Lamb & M.D. Bryant (London & New York: Cassell, 1999), 13-14.

19 See weblink http://www.mkgandhi.org/momgandhi/chap67.htm accessed on July 19, 2016.

20 See Pushparajan, Ibid., 106-13, for further details.

The '*shuddhi* movement' is at the heart of *gharwapasi*. Its logic for *shuddhikaran* runs like this:

> Suppose young children in orphanages have been converted by Missionaries or Mussalmans; or again that a Hindu joins another faith for certain material considerations, but after some time feels disillusioned and wants to come back; or again, the depressed class people who joined Christianity whole-sale, feel it worthwhile to readopt their ancestral faith, in all these cases, is it not just and right that we reconvert them?[21]

Gandhi loathed this logic. He held that if any Hindu who had converted to any other religion wanted to return to the Hindu fold, then his/her very repentance would be sufficient to retrace his/her steps back without any purification rituals. Besides objecting to *shuddi* conversions, he stressed that there was no such thing as proselytism in Hinduism. Differences like this would ever divide the proponents of Gandhian thought and Hindutva, the latter of who advocate a militant, exclusivist type of Hinduism that is the cause of much controversy and conflict today.[22]

3.2. Religious Issues

Gandhi firmly believed in the basic unity and equality of all religions. He likened all religions to beautiful flowers in a large garden that add beauty and colour to the setting precisely on account of their differences. True dharma did not lie in rigidly performing rites and rituals or in observing strict do's and don'ts but in striving for Truth. His 'God is Truth' or 'Truth is God' axioms led him to a lifelong love of *satyagraha* that made him see everything and everyone as emerging from the same one Source and merging once again into that divine Source.[23] Moreover, while remaining deeply rooted in his own Hindu religious tradition, Gandhi had deep regard and reverence for the scriptures of all religions and viewed them as complementary.[24]

21 Pushparajan , Ibid., 111.

22 See Bindu Puri, "Hinduism – A Legacy in Dispute: Savarkar and Gandhi," *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* 30/2 (April 2003): 271-90, for details.

23 See Pushparajan, Ibid., 113-6, for a summary of Gandhi's presuppositions for/against conversion.

24 See Pushparajan, "Attitude towards the Scriptures of Other Religions: A Gandhian Model," 339-42.

With this background, Gandhi was opposed to religious conversions for mainly two reasons: (a) theological, for he assumed that the scriptures of all religions were equally true, good, beautiful and had their strengths and weaknesses, and (b) practical, since he was convinced that conversions could cause great discontent and division among peoples.

So dear was religion to Gandhi that he wrote: "Religion is a matter of life and death. A man does not change his religion as he changes his garments. He takes it with him beyond the grave. Nor does a man profess his religion to oblige others. He professes a religion because he cannot do otherwise."[25]While opposing *dharmantar* Gandhi was an ardent proponent of dialogue. He exemplified the spirit of dialogue by reading and reflecting upon the scriptures of all religions and by cementing bonds of fraternity and friendship with believers of all religions. Prof. Pushparajan succinctly describes Gandhi's view of divinity as a 'trans-religious concept of God' fructifying in his imbibing of a profound 'trans-religious spirituality'.[26] Such a view of God and religion was deeply personal, while holding potential for building multi-religious, multi-cultural communities that would hold close to their heart a vibrant eco-vision for our times.[27]

4. Evaluating Gharwapasi Practices in the Light of Gandhian Perspective

Having highlighted Gandhi's views on religious conversion from four perspectives—personal, cultural, sociopolitical and religious—we now question the need and value of *gharwapasi* (*shuddhikaran*) that has been done on individuals and groups of people. I was made aware of a case of *gharwapasi* in the aftermath of the Dangs atrocities against adivasi Christians.[28] As usual, the allegation was that 'forcible conversions' to Christianity had been undertaken, which had to be rectified and 'purified' with a *gharwapasi* ritual. We reflect on the

25 As quoted by Seshagiri Rao, Ibid., 141.

26 See his articles with these titles mentioned in footnote n.3 above.

27 See Pushparajan, "Relevance of Gandhian Eco-Vision," *Journal of Dharma* 31/4 (Oct. – Dec. 2006): 407-36.

28 See my reflection entitled, "*Gharvapasi* with *Gangajal*," *Sunday Seeds for Daily Deeds* (Mumbai: Pauline Publications, 2008), 82-84, for details.

evidence in the four realms of our enquiry on the basis of Gandhi's observations and opinions.

4.1. Gharwapasi and Personal Considerations

We have seen that Gandhi opposed any conversion which was induced by force or by fraud. While those who organize *gharwapasi* programmes accuse Christian and Muslim missioners of converting Hindus and resorting to *dharmantar* by force, they paradoxically indulge in the very same activities and methods that they critique and combat.[29] There is proof that such programmes have been done by force since those who have undergone the purification ritual have shown resistance. There have also been protests from civil society against such activities,[30] but on account of patronage from the Government, such programmes have been going on sporadically. In order to respect individual conscience and regain societal harmony, it is necessary to ensure and enable only those who freely decide to undergo any conversion (*atmaparivartan* or *dharmantar*) to do so; for, the state has no right to interfere in a citizen's personal choice in matters of religion.[31] In this regard, the ironical 'Freedom of Religion Bill' passed in many states infringes upon one's right to "profess, practice and propagate" one's religion guaranteed by article 25 of the Indian Constitution.

Another contentious question in debates of *gharwapasi* is of identities. Hindutva groups function on the premise that all Indians are Hindus. While the *dharmantar* to Islam or Christianity is considered as 'conversion,' all those who embrace Hinduism are considered as 'coming home.' In other words, India is assumed to be a 'Hindu home'; and, to be 'at home' in India one must necessarily be a Hindu. Here, the dividing line between culture and religion is deliberately

29 See, for instance, Christophe Jaffrelot, "'Reconversion' Paradoxes," *Indian Express* (Jan 7, 2015). Web link http://carnegieendowment.org/2015/01/07/reconversion-paradoxes accessed on June 20, 2016.

30 See Tarique Anwar, "Ghar Vapsi: Civil society needs to challenge RSS's conversion agenda," *Firstpost* (Dec 14, 2014) internet web-link http://www.firstpost.com/india/ghar-vapsi-civil-society-needs-to-challenge-rsss-conversion-agenda-1848629.html accessed on June 20, 2016.

31 The same argument is made by R. K. Gupta, Ibid., 269-70.

obfuscated so as to wield power and win privileges for Hindus. Scholars of Indian history opine that communities in pre-colonial India were not built upon the ties of any one religion as such, but around the bonds of location, castes, occupations, sects, languages, etc., and were characterized by great diversity.[32] Over centuries there has been a 'fission and fusion' that allowed for fluidity across tribes, sects, creeds, classes, castes, cultures, rituals, art and dance forms.[33] Consequently, it would be absurd to insist that India has always been the 'home' exclusively for some homogenous religious community called 'Hindus.'

4.2. Gharwapasi and Cultural Concerns

The argument of personal identity can be taken forward into the realm of culture. Gandhi was understandably concerned about the loss of cultural anchorage among those who converted to Christianity, especially as a consequence of colonial influence. There was a measure of '*alienness,*' so to say, in their adoption of Latinized rites and rituals, and sometimes insistence to adopt Western dress and lifestyle by foreign missioners. While this certainly calls for reflection on how 'Indian' or 'indigenous' Christianity or Indian 'churches' have been in their preaching and practice, the same could be said of Hindutva practices and policies like *gharwapasi*. The culture of those who have been forced into 'homecoming' is scarcely respected. For example, adivasis have their own indigenous religions with their own rites and rituals. However, the adivasis who were made to undergo '*shuddhikaran*' in south Gujarat's tribal belt had to undergo an investiture ceremony with Hanuman-*chalisa*[34] performed by a Hindu

32 See Romila Thapar, "Early India: an Overview," in *History and Beyond* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 114-36; R. Champakalakshmi, "Caste and Community in Pre-modern South India," *Jeevadhara* 31/181 (January 2001): 5-15, and McKim Marriott, ed., *Village India: Studies in the Little Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955) for the diversity seen in studies of 8 villages in 7 linguistic areas of 5 provinces in India.

33 See Richard Lannoy, *The Speaking Tree: A Study of Indian Culture and Society* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1971), 135-242; also A.L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India* (Delhi: Rupa & Co., 1997).

34 It was common in the South Gujarat area to propagate Hanuman (monkey-god) as the *ishta-deva* (patron) of the adivasis. *Hanuman-Chalisa* is a booklet with prayers to Hanuman. Describing the ritual of '*gharvapasi*' the "*Citizens' Commission*

priest and given Hanuman as *ishtadeva* (main deity). Such rituals and deities are alien to adivasi culture.

Hindutva can also be regarded as a form of cultural imperialism since it straitjackets everyone into a monolithic 'Hindu' culture. While it publicizes its aim as being purely 'cultural,' many communities see its programmes as being 'religious.' Hence, it is not surprising that there is much opposition against the foisting of a Brahminic cultural agenda upon others, which results in a further strengthening of caste hierarchy and hegemony.[35] We mentioned above that community can be built by potent symbolisms that unite some, while fragmenting other groups. Theorists like Pierre Bourdieu hypothesize that the culture of the dominant classes and castes creates a "fictitious integration of society as a whole" and a "false consciousness" among the so-called 'lower' castes and classes thereby legitimizing the established order.[36] There is great danger in propagating the idea of a great 'Hindu home' which will unify all Indians, for India is unique mainly because of the delightful diversity of its cultures, lifestyles and peoples. Forging cultural uniformity is a form of 'symbolic violence,'[37] which must be contested.

Report on the Incidents in Dangs District, 1999," reads: "He [adivasi undergoing *gharvapasi*] was given a '*Hanuman Chalisa*' booklet and made to recite it in a prayer room. From Waghai they [adivasi and his family] were taken to the Unai hot springs, which is also a place of Hindu worship. There they were made to buy coconuts and offer them to the local '*Mataji*' deity, and wear '*tilaks*' and a Hanuman amulet around their necks. They were given a laminated picture of Hanuman, as well as one depicting Rama, Lakshman and Shabri. [*Shabri*, according to local lore, was a tribal girl who offered local berries to Rama and Lakshman]."

35 See, for instance, Kancha Ilaiah, *Why I Am Not a Hindu: A Sudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy, Culture and Political Economy* (Calcutta: Samya, 1996), who argues that many communities of '*bahujans*' and adivasis of India are not really Hindus and should not be considered and counted as such.

36 See Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press), 167.

37 'Symbolic violence' is a term used by Bourdieu; quoted by Joe Painter, "Pierre Bourdieu," in *Thinking Space*, ed. M. Crang and N. Thrift (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 246.

4.3. Gharwapasi and Sociopolitical Factors

While the Gandhian vision of forging a unity of all the castes in India to collaboratively combat colonial powers was commendable, one wonders whether this was a practical way of addressing the complex, conflict-ridden issue of caste. Gandhi hoped that the spectre of caste would automatically be exorcised once India gained Independence. This did not happen. Instead, the Gandhian opposition to *dharmantar* was matched by a bold call for conversions to Buddhism from an eminent political figure of that time, Dr. Ambedkar. While Gandhi viewed the caste-system as functional division of labour and hesitated to critique its innate anomalies since caste belongs to the realm of *[ta*, the cosmic order, based on the *Dharmasastras* and the law of *karma* that should remain undisturbed, Ambedkar critiqued it in the strongest of terms, as follows:

> [I]n my opinion, unless you change your social order you can achieve little by way of progress. You cannot mobilize the community either for defence or for offence. You cannot build anything on the foundation of caste. You cannot build up a nation, you cannot build up a morality. Anything that you will build on the foundations of caste will crack and will never be a whole.[38]

Gharwapasi also has a political dimension to it. The power of numbers is always a factor to be considered in political circles. By indulging in or supporting *gharwapasi*, parties with political ambitions seek to win elections on two counts: first, it is hoped that those who have undergone *gharwapasi* will add to numbers and fortify Hindu votes; second, by supporting *gharwapasi*, political parties project themselves as custodians of Hindu religion. Hindu nationalists have long known about the power of numbers. Years ago Golwalkar warned: "There is one point on which we have to be specially forewarned. And that is the census .. The Hindus should not remain ignorant of the potency of numbers … Further, all Hindus, to whatever sect, caste, clan, or tribe they may belong, must put down their community as 'Hindu' only."[39] It is not merely accidental that *gharwapasi* ceremonies are either conducted or stalled just before elections.

38 Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste: With a Reply to 'Mahatma' Gandhi* (Bangalore: Dalit Sahitya Akademi, 1987), 60-62.

39 *Bunch of Thoughts*, 362.

4.4. Gharwapasi and Religious Issues

The entire conversions debate has most often been regarded as a 'religious' issue. Gandhi desired that everyone should be left free to decide about a very personal matter of religion and felt that those who converted to Christianity were 'not free' since there were economic, educational and social benefits attached to their conversions. Moreover, for Gandhi (as for most Hindus) conversions go against the basic religious principles of *dharma* and *karma* and disrupt Hindu society while also feeding the myth that Christianity is superior to Hinduism.[40] On the other side of the debate, Christians defend conversions on the basis of 'rights' enshrined in the Constitution, while also pointing out that 'propagation' of Christianity belongs to its very essence. Both sides speak of freedom of religion; but, while for the Christians it is the freedom to propagate Christianity and for anyone to accept it, for the Hindus the freedom refers to that of the one receiving propaganda not be converted by unethical means. What is at stake here is the clash of two worldviews—the importance given to tolerance in the Hindu religious tradition and the stress on human rights by Christians.[41] There are probably two ways of resolving the bind: first, of both parties listening to the critiques posed by each other and embarking upon the path of dialogue; and second, by also listening to the voices and opinions of those who have changed their religion. It is rather simplistic to assume that those who have changed their religion are only 'victims' and not active agents of their own choices.

Debating religion is always perilous since we are always and everywhere 'condemned,' so to say, to discuss about supernatural entities (God, Brahman, some Absolute Being) and afterlife (heaven, nirvana, *moksha, mukti*, etc.) with our limited human language, symbols, concepts, etc. Thus, it is always wise to come together to

40 See Julian Saldanha, *Hindu Sensibilities towards Conversion* (Bombay: Asian Trading Corporation), n.d., for details. He also points out the legal implications of religious conversions.

41 For details see Sebastian C.H. Kim, *In Search of Identity: Debates on Religious Conversion in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), especially chs. 7 & 8.

decipher what is the truth (*satya*) that we seek to foster in any given situation. Gandhi's *satyagraha* empowered him to transcend every confining image of God and enabled him to challenge any exclusive spirituality that created divisions among people. The proponents of *gharwapasi*—and, for that matter, those who seek to convert others by force or fraud—would do well to learn from Gandhi's 'trans-religious conception of God' and 'trans-religious spirituality' so as to build a harmonious and whole India.[42]

5. Conclusion: Towards a Sarvodaya for Community in India

There is much that we can learn from Gandhi, especially at the present times when there is so much of animosity among religions in India. Indeed, through their writings, and more so through the witness of their lives, Gandhians like Prof. Pushparajan inspire us to embark upon a path of self-conversion, before any thoughts or talks of converting other people and transforming societal structures. He writes: "A radical conversion to a new pattern of living was the central message of Christ, which he himself proclaimed first and foremost by his own life."[43] Likewise Gandhi said: "*maaru jeevan, ej maaro sandesh che,*" i.e., "my life is my message." Can we, as individual Christians and as Christian community, confidently say the same today?

The process of *metanoia*—a turn around or 'homecoming' to what is deepest in life—is not some finished product, but a lifelong spiritual process necessary for genuine growth and progress. The same accusations that Gandhi leveled at Christians and churches of his time, could apply to us, Christians today: superficiality, elitism, excessive consumerism, dependence on money-power, stifling institutionalization and posing to be patrons and benefactors of those we serve. Shunning these encumbrances, our inner transformation or *atmaparivartan* must fructify into living other-centered and eco-

42 See Pushparajan's articles on the same. Also see Saral Jhingran, "Gandhi, Religious Pluralism, and the Foundation of Indian Nationhood," *Gandhi Marg* 23/3 (Oct.-Dec. 2001): 341-49, who compares Gandhi's, Kabir's and Nehru's views on religion with regard to the building of Indian nationhood.

43 Pushparajan, "Mission and Commission of Christ," *Journal of Dharma* 6/2 (Apr.-Jun. 1981): 140.

friendly lives so that we give witness to the poor, self-emptying Christ who reached out to all in need without ever enforcing a ritual-order, rigid code of conduct and belief-system upon those he touched and transformed. He truly set people free.

Gandhi's vision of *sarvodaya* (universal, comprehensive progress) could help all communities in India to work together for the uplift of all sections of society, indeed, for the welfare of the whole cosmos. With 'trans-religious spiritualty' and with 'trans-religious conceptions of God' while being rooted in our own religious traditions, we can reach out for dialogue and transformative action to make this world a better place. Today, more than ever before, we must remember that "to be religious is to be inter-religious."[44] There is need to preserve our unity with all our differences that can enrich us. I conclude with a vision that Pushparajan holds dear to him:

> Cleaning one's faith of its shortcomings and excrescences and blending into one's faith every acceptable feature of other faiths, all religions will become more pure and approach the 'centre' closer and closer. Thus all the faiths could be complementary to one another in moving together closer and closer towards that underlying Religion, Truth or God, a conversion of all faiths to that focal point.[45]

44 See Pushparajan, "Gandhi's Contribution to Inter-Religious Harmony," *Sanyasa* 6/2 (Jul.-Dec. 2011): 192-206, for details.

45 Pushparajan, "Gandhi's Views on Conversion," Ibid., 117.

MAHATMA GANDHI AND CHRISTIANITY
Mutual Influence

James D. Chellappa

Abstract: *This article deals with Gandhi and Christianity. It is a survey of Christianity's influence on the personality of Gandhi and vice versa. Gandhi lived his life like a hermit. He followed many of Jesus' teachings very seriously. The Sermon on the Mount had profound impact on the life and message of Gandhi. All through his life Gandhi was a student and teacher of religions. For him religion has to be at the service of the poor and downtrodden. Gandhi was a critic of colonial Christianity and its proponents for their materialistic attitude, serving the mammon instead of serving their Master. Gandhi, accepting Jesus as a renowned world teacher, encouraged his own disciples to take Jesus more seriously. He also thought that the Western Church has distorted the image of Jesus by attributing divinity upon him. Some of the friends and sympathisers of Gandhi saw in him a real embodiment of Jesus' personality because of Gandhi's insistence on passive resistance in political struggles. Gandhi propagated ahimsa and satyagraha both of which have very close affinities with Jesus' teaching on love. There is no doubt that Christian influence upon Gandhi made him who he is. Simultaneously Gandhi too influenced many Christians to rethink and relive the tenets of Jesus.*

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1. Introduction

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, fondly called as the *Mahatma* by the Indians and people elsewhere, has considerably impacted international

politics especially in the area of peaceful resistance and non-violence. Intelligentsia accepts him as a political philosopher per se. Yet his influence on religious thinking is noteworthy. Gandhi took his entire life's mission as a religious one—a quest for truth. Even Gandhi has once said like this, "I have met many religious men in my life who are politicians in disguise, but I who appear to be a politician am really at heart a man of religion."[1] Another commentator says about Gandhi that, "his religious consciousness is a language which expressed his political mission. His religion was politics and his politics became his religion."[2] Dr. S. Radhakrishnan identifies the notions 'religion' and 'quest for truth' to be synonyms.[3] As a matter of fact Gandhi "was supremely consistent in his devotion to truth. He was, like the ancient sages, a recluse and an earnest seeker of truth, a spiritual explorer or a scientist experimenting, all his life to discover truth and apply it to the practical problems facing man."[4] Gandhi was an original thinker though he was also influenced a lot by Western thinkers. He was so rooted in Indian traditions, religion and culture that the West was never able to overthrow his commitment to the national cause. He was also a prolific writer, who wrote more or less on all subjects related to human life and ethical living. His writings were collected and published by the government of India in ninety-six big volumes![5] Thousands of books are written about the Mahatma and his contribution to humanity.

Mahatma Gandhi was a man who had his influence on many other great personalities. Mishra opines that "Mahatma Gandhi's life is universally seen as representing amongst the highest standards of moral behaviour in all facets; individual, social, political, economic,

1 Cited by C. S. Ramakrishnan, "The Contributions of World Thinkers to Religious Harmony and Peace," in *Religious Pluralism and Peace Culture*, ed., S. Narayanaswamy (Chennai: ICSA Books, 2007), 55.

2 Nil Mohan Singh, "Gandhi's Experiment in Introducing Religion into Politics," in *Aspects of Gandhian Thought*, ed., Ramjee Singh, et.al. (Madurai: Indian Society of Gandhian Studies, 1994), 29.

3 S. Radhakrishnan, *Search for Truth* (Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 2000), 3.

4 Sanjay Kumar, *Perspectives on Gandhian Thoughts* (New Delhi: Sonali Publications, 2012), 1.

5 M. K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 96 Vols. (New Delhi: Publication Division, Govt of India, 1958 -1984).

moral, and religious. Self-realization through selfless service of society, nation and humanity, was the key to his life and thought."[6] C. F. Andrews, Stanley E. Jones, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama, and Desmond Tutu the former Anglican Arch Bishop of South Africa are some noteworthy figures in the vast millions influenced by Gandhi's life and teachings.

2. Gandhi as a Pluralist

Religion, as William James puts it, is "the feelings, acts, and expressions of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider as divine."[7] Pluralism is the philosophy of religious tolerance. It is the mutual acceptance of the religious experience of each other. Accepting the other is the basic principle underlying mutual co-existence of all of human religious musings. Pluralism is the theory that a person, "while holding to one's own religion as true and valid, recognizes other great religions also, in some way or other, true and valid paths to the Supreme and hence effective ways of salvation."[8] The opposite of pluralism is the exclusivist position, belief in the one, which argues that there is only one authentic expression of the ultimate reality. Paul Tillich criticizes this by saying that "the one expression of the ultimate denies all other expressions. It becomes almost inevitably idolatrous and demonic. This has happened to all religions which take the concrete expression of their ultimate concern seriously."[9]

Gandhi was a staunch Hindu. He was a Vaishnavite and chose Rama an incarnate of Lord Vishnu as his *istadevata,* personal God. Among all the religions known to him, he found Hinduism to be "the most tolerant of all religions. Its freedom from dogma makes a forcible appeal inasmuch as it gives the votary the largest scope for self expression. Not being an exclusive religion, it enables the followers

6 Anil Dutta Mishra, *Mahatma Gandhi on Ethics* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing, 2010), 23.

7 William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (London: Routledge Classics, 1902; rep 2002), 26.

8 P. L. John Panicker, *Gandhi on Pluralism and Communalism* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2006), 15.

9 Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper and Bros, 1958), 122.

of that faith not merely to respect all the other religions, but it also enables them to admire and assimilate whatever may be good in other religions."[10]

Gandhi was an authentic religious pluralist too. He said, "my position is that all great religions are fundamentally equal. We must have innate respect for other religions as we have for our own. Mind you, not mutual toleration, but equal respect."[11] Ramachandra Guha identifies four major callings in the life of Gandhi: "freedom fighter, social reformer, religious pluralist and prophet."[12] Dr. S. Radhakrishnan says that "Gandhi is the prophet of a liberated life-wielding power over millions of human beings by virtue of his exceptional holiness and heroism."[13]

All through his life Gandhi was a student of religions, who was in search of the meaning of life from various religious scriptures. Gandhi also tirelessly laboured for a multi-religious India of peaceful coexistence of Hindus, Muslims, Christians and more.[14] Indian Christian politician and thinker M. M. Thomas summarizes Gandhian notion of the equality of religions as follows: "It is based first on the unfathomable and unknowable character of the One God who is over us all; secondly, on the never-ending forms of divine revelation and human religious response to them, thirdly on the centrality of the law of nonviolence enjoined by all the religions, fourthly, on the existence of errors and imperfections in all religions and fifthly, on the conviction that all religions are in evolution towards fuller realization of Truth."[15]

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10 Mahatma Gandhi, *What Is Hinduism?* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1994; rep 2004), 4.

11 Mahatma Gandhi, *What Is Hinduism?* 108.

12 Ramachandra Guha, *Gandhi before India* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2013), 9.

13 S. Radhakrishnan, "Introduction: Gandhi's Religion and Politics" in his (ed.) *Mahatma Gandhi: Essays and Reflections on His Life and Work*, (Mumbai: Jaico Publishing, 1957), 29.

14 Stephen Prothero, *God Is not One: Eight Rival Religions That Run the World* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011), 167.

15 M. M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of Indian Renaissance* (Chennai: CLS, 1991), 205.

Gandhi was convinced that that God transcends all human understandings. He indentified God as Truth. God is Truth and Truth is God. Sumithra says, "this means, for Gandhi there is no atheist, for even an atheist is a seeker after truth!"[16] For Gandhi, says Sunny "truth was an experimental reality that is to be experienced through socio-political and economic realms of life. Thus the struggle for truth and justice becomes a law of life."[17] Gandhi also saw that God has a thousand names, yet nameless. Humans can only describe God in their own poor language. We can pray to God through whatever names that pleases us.[18] Gandhi met God concretely in the poor and the helpless. He identified God with the poor. He discovered God as the *Daridranarayan*, God of the poor. He believed that it was the duty of believers to serve the poor.[19] Gandhi gave due respect to the scriptures of all religions. He read the Gita, the Bible, the Koran, Guru Granth, and scriptures of other religions as well. He was open in his quest for truth. According to a Gandhian scholar T. S. Devadoss, "Gandhi advocated *Sarvadharma-samabhava*, i.e., reverence for all religions."[20] Yet Gandhi was, "against all dogma, even religious dogmas, and he subjected religious doctrines to rigorous reasonable analysis."[21]

3. Christianity and Its Influence on Gandhi

An American Methodist theologian and missionary Rev. Stanley E. Jones said of Gandhi: "One of the most Christ-like men in history was not called a Christian at all."[22] The first encounter of Gandhi in his childhood with Christianity was rather negative. He heard of European

16 Sunand Sumithra, *Christian Theologies from an Indian Perspective* (Bangalore: TBT, 1990), 218.

17 P. Sunny, *The Gandhian Economy in God's Redemption: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Tiruvalla, Author, 2006), 49.

18 R. K. Prabhu and U. R. Rao, eds., *The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing, 1967), 78, 79.

19 Ignatius Jesudasan, *The Gandhian Theology of Liberation* (Gujarat: Sahitya Prakash, 1987), 149.

20 T. S. Devadoss, *Mahatma Gandhi* (Chennai: University of Madras, 1995), 46.

21 Satiish Chaturvedi, "Gandhian Concept of Aesthetics," in *Gandhism: A Vision for Peace*, ed., Sattish Chadurvedi and Rajesh Shukla ((Jaipur: Pointer Publishers, 2009), 54.

22 Cited by Devadoss, *Mahatma Gandhi*, 47.

missionaries pouring abuse on Hindu deities and practices. He knew of new Indian converted Christians eating beef, drinking liquor and adopting European costumes. So he started to dislike Christianity.[23] Gandhi's real contact with Christianity began in England where he went in 1888.[24] He started to read the Bible which he received as a gift from an English Christian friend who was also a strict vegetarian. This friend helped Gandhi to expel some of the prejudices which he developed against Christianity early in his mind. The reading of the Old Testament made Gandhi to be uninterested; the violent passages repelled him. But the New Testament and in it the Sermon on the Mount made a positive impact in the life of Gandhi.[25] Robin Boyd feels that for Gandhi, "the essence of Christianity seemed to lie in the Sermon on the Mount."[26] Boyd further says that "Gandhi felt that the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount was Jesus' major contribution to human happiness."[27] It is in this Sermon on the Mount, writes a biographer, that Gandhi "had found his deepest convictions superbly stated—a complete way of life which he had never thought of as "Christian" because he had never met a Christian who attempted to follow it!"[28] In Gandhi's attitude we can see a slight similarity of what Nietzsche has said, "in reality there has been only one Christian, and he died on the Cross."[29] Gandhi understood the Gospel message of Jesus straightforwardly and plainly. Christ taught his disciples to challenge injustice without breaking the notion that God is love. Gandhi grasped it clearly. In David Cortright's words, Gandhi "instinctively understood the transformative power of returning love for hatred, good for evil, and he set out his public life to harness this force for social change."[30] Gandhi was a vivid reader and interpreter

23 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth: An Autobiography* (Chennai: Apple Publishing, 2013), 32.

24 A. J. Anandan, *God for All, God for Me: Gandhi's Religious Dualism* (Bangalore: SAIACS Press, 1998), 13.

25 Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth: An Autobiography*, 66.

26 Robin Boyd, *Khristadvaita: A Theology for India* (Chennai: CLS, 1977), 22.

27 Boyd, *Khristadvaita: A Theology for India*, 191.

28 Reginald Reynolds, *The True Book About Mahatma Gandhi* (Bangalore: PTI Book Depot, 1966), 31.

29 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 39.

30 David Cortright, *Gandhi and Beyond: Nonviolence for an Age of Terrorism* (New Delhi: Viva Books, 2007), 13.

of the Bible. His interpretations of the biblical passages are recently compiled and made into a book.[31]

In South Africa Gandhi got more occasions of getting in touch with Christianity. He had many Christian friends. He attended a few Church services; he enjoyed the hearing of Christian hymns. His friends taught him the concept of redemption of sin through believing in Jesus, which Gandhi could not grasp. Gandhi "could not regard Christianity as the perfect religion or the greatest religion."[32] Here he met Mr. A. W. Baker, who besides being an attorney was a staunch lay preacher. Mr. Baker introduced Gandhi to Miss. Harris, Miss Gabb, Mr. Coates and others with whom he joined for afternoon prayers in Mr. Baker's office. Gandhi even records a prayer added on his behalf by his friends: "Lord, show the path to the new brother who has come amongst us. Give him, Lord, the peace Thou hast given us. May the Lord Jesus who has saved us save him too. We ask all this in the name of Jesus."[33]

Mr. Baker tried his level best to convert Gandhi to be a Christian. He even took Gandhi to religious revival meetings organized by famous preacher/evangelist Rev. Andrew Murray. But these revival meetings too couldn't change Gandhi's religious views.[34] Gandhi's reasoning concerning his involvements with Christianity is worth mentioning: "But I saw no reason for changing my belief, my religion. It was impossible for me to believe that I could go to heaven or attain salvation only by becoming a Christian. My difficulties lay deeper. It was more than I could believe that Jesus was the only Son of God, and that only he who believed in him would have everlasting life. If God could have sons, all of us were His sons. If Jesus was like God, or God himself, then all men were like God and could be God Himself. My reason was not ready to believe literally that Jesus by his death and by his blood redeemed the sins of the world. Metaphorically there might

31 William W. Emilsen, ed., *Gandhi's Bible* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2009).
32 Louis Fischer, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (London: Granada Publishing, 1982), 62.
33 Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth: An Autobiography*, 119.
34 Anandan, *God for All, God for Me: Gandhi's Religious Dualism*, 17.

be some truth in it."[35] Gandhi also was against conversion. He wrote, "I do not believe in people telling others of their faith, especially with a view to conversion. Faith does not admit of telling. It has to be lived and then it becomes self-propagating.[36]

Gandhi read lots of books given by his Christian friends, especially by Mr. Coates. Among all the books, Leo Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is within You*, he liked the most. Gandhi confessed that this book "overwhelmed me. It left an abiding impression on me. Before the independent thinking, profound morality and truthfulness of this book, all the books given to me by Mr. Coates seemed to pale into insignificance.[37] Terrence J. Rynne identifies three ideas of Tolstoy which greatly influenced Gandhi: "that the Sermon on the Mount taught an assertive version of nonviolence, the importance of service, and the idea of bread labour."[38] Tolstoy depicts nonviolence as the central teaching of Jesus. Rynne suggests that Tolstoy has emphasized that "nonviolence, based on the fact that every human life is sacred, is an outgrowth of the fundamental law of love that is within the heart of each individual. Nonviolence is active and powerful in the same way love is active and powerful."[39]

While Gandhi led series of struggles against the racist South African government, Tolstoy appreciated him and acknowledged that Gandhi was offering the whole world, a new method to fight injustice and tyranny through the practice of loving resistance on a large scale. Though Tolstoy theorized nonviolence, it was Gandhi who put it into practice by living it.[40] Gandhi later named this method of nonviolent resistance as *Satyagraha*.[41] This concept of Gandhi is "a weapon of the strongest and excludes the use of violence in any shape or

35 Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth: An Autobiography,* 133.

36 M. K. Gandhi, *Sarvodaya: The Welfare for All*, ed., Bharatan Kumarappa (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing, 1954), 27.

37 Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth: An Autobiography,* 134.

38 Terrence J. Rynne, *Gandhi and Jesus: The Saving Power of Nonviolence* (Bangalore: ATC, 2008), 29.

39 Rynne, *Gandhi and Jesus: The Saving Power of Nonviolence*, 30.

40 Sanat Kumar Sharma, *Gandhi: Way to Peace* (Varanasi: VPM, 2014), 48.

41 S*atyagraha* means truth force. It means resisting untruth by truthful means.

form. It implies vindication of Truth not by infliction of suffering on the opponent, but on one's self."[42] Archbishop Desmond Tutu has acknowledged that the success attained by Gandhi through nonviolent means was very much inspiring to him.[43]

Martin Luther King Jr., has carefully analyzed Gandhian concept of nonviolent resistance and he brings five points concerning it or *Satyagraha* as a method in bringing better racial conditions. (i) This is not a method for cowards; it does resist. This method is passive physically but strongly active spiritually; it is nonaggressive physically but dynamically aggressive spiritually. (ii) Nonviolent resistance does not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponent, but to win his friendship and understanding. The end is redemption and reconciliation. (iii) The attack is directed against forces of evil rather than against persons who are caught in those forces. It is evil that we are seeking to defeat, not the persons victimized by evil. (iv) It avoids not only external physical violence but also internal violence of spirit. At the centre of nonviolence stands the principle of love. (v) Finally, the method of nonviolence is based on the conviction that the universe is on the side of justice. It is this deep faith in the future that causes the nonviolent resister to accept suffering without retaliation. He knows that in his struggle for justice he has cosmic companionship.[44]

Gandhi had high regard for the personality of Jesus. Yet he felt that Christendom has misplaced Jesus and has bypassed him. Once in Rome by seeing a painting of the crucified Christ, Gandhi said, "joy comes not out of infliction of pain on others but out of pain voluntarily borne by oneself."[45] Mahatma Gandhi had an impression that Jesus

42 Shriman Narayan, *Gandhi: The Man and His Thought* (New Delhi: Publication Division, Govt of India, 1969), 13.

43 Catherine Ingram, *In the Footsteps of Gandhi: Conversations with Spiritual Social Activists* (New Delhi, Rupa & Co, 1997), 279.

44 Martin Luther King Jr., "Nonviolence and Racial Justice," in *The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.*, ed., James M. Washington (New York: Harper Collins, 1986), 7-9.

45 Mahatma Gandhi, My *Religion*, ed., Bharatan Kumarappa (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing, 1955), 25.

was a real "*Satyagrahi*."[46] Gandhi even spoke of Jesus as "the most active resister known perhaps to history. His was nonviolence *par excellence*."[47] He was critical about colonial Christianity and said that "the nations of Europe are called Christians but they have forgotten the teachings of Christ. They may read the Bible or study the Hebrew language, but they do not act according to the teachings of the former. This wind blowing from the West is opposed to the teachings of Jesus. They have forgotten Jesus himself."[48] In Gandhi we can see a person who is authentically committed to the precepts of Jesus, yet a strong critic of institutionalized Christianity. He even once said that "Christianity has a bloody record against it not because Jesus was found wanting, but because the environment in which it spread was not responsive to his lofty teaching."[49] Gandhi further has said, "I rebel against orthodox Christianity, as I am convinced that it has distorted the message of Jesus. He was an Asiatic whose message was delivered through many media and when it had the backing of a Roman emperor it became an imperialist faith as it remains even today."[50]

4. Influence of Gandhi on Christianity

Many Christians were influenced by Gandhian ideals and teachings. According to Sean Scalmer, "in Britain, nonconformist, mostly middle-class, Christians were Gandhi's keenest supporters; in America, those tight communities organized around the African-American church proved ultimately more significant to the extension of the Gandhian way."[51] It is recorded that in 1921 Rev. John Haynes Holmes of New York told to his Community Church congregation that Gandhi was the greatest man in the world and when I think of Mahatma Gandhi,

46 Samuel George, *The Historical Particularity of Jesus: A Dialogue with the Hindu View of History* (Kolkata: Punthi Pustak, 2014), 75.
47 Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 84, 372.
48 Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 20, 27.
49 Gandhi, *My Religion*, 27.
50 Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 62, 388.
51 Sean Scalmer, *Gandhi in the West: The Mahatma and the Rise of Radical Protest* (New Delhi: CUP, 2011), 7.

I think of Jesus Christ.[52] In 1986 Pope John Paul II in an interview at Rome, just after his visit to India said, "I was there to evangelize... I have evangelized the Indian people through the works of Mahatma Gandhi." Gandhi, according to the Pope "was much more of a Christian than many people who say they are Christians."[53]

Rev. C. F. Andrews, an Anglican clergy and missionary is one important associate of Gandhi who was also inspired by Gandhian values of nonviolence. Andrews recollects his friendship with Gandhi thus, "in Mahatma Gandhi himself, whom I thus met in South Africa for the first time, this sovereign power of winning victories through was apparent in every aspect of his hard life of pain. Our hearts met from the first moment we saw one another, and they have remained united by the strongest ties of love ever since. To be with him was an inspiration which awakened all that was best in me, and gave me a high courage, enkindled and enlightened by his own."[54] Andrews further romanticized Gandhi and said that "in him [Gandhi], from the very first, I felt instinctively that there had come into the world, not only a new religious personality of the highest order, moving the hearts of men and women to incredible sacrifice, but also a new religious truth, which yet was not new, but old as the stars and the everlasting hills. His one message was that long-suffering and redeeming love is alone invincible."[55] Mahatma Gandhi fondly used to call Rev. Andrews as "C. F. A. i.e., Christ's Faithful Apostle."[56]

Rev. Stanley E. Jones, a Methodist Missionary is another Christian who took Gandhi seriously. He likens Gandhi to the Jewish liberator Moses and says that the time Gandhi spent outside India for twenty-one years equipping himself for the Indian national freedom struggle is similar to Moses trained by God in the wilderness of Midian for

52 Cited in Lloyd I. Rudolph, "Gandhi in the Mind of America," in *Postmodern Gandhi and Other Essays*, ed., Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph (New Delhi: OUP, 2009), 92.

53 Cited in Lloyd I. Rudolph, "Gandhi in the Mind of America," in *Postmodern Gandhi and Other Essays*, 116; *The New York Times,* 2 and 12 February 1986.

54 C. F. Andrews, *What I Owe to Christ* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1933), 124.

55 Andrews, *What I Owe to Christ*, 125.

56 E. Stanley Jones, *Mahatma Gandhi: An Interpretation* (Lucknow: Lucknow Publishing House, 1963), 68.

40 years.[57] Rev. Jones sees in Gandhi binary qualities which blended together and made him a strong person. In Gandhi's life he observed a combination of East and West, a reconciliation of the urban and the peasant, a coming together of the passive and the militant, the personality of an ascetic and the servant, the identity of the mystical and the practical, an amalgamation of stubbornness and yieldingness, a combination of poise and power, a meeting of humility and assertiveness, and finally a Hindu who was deeply Christian.[58] Jones further says that Gandhi was, "a Hindu by allegiance and a Christian by affinity. He was a Hindu who was deeply Christianized—more Christianized than most of the Christians."[59] Rev. Jones praises Gandhi that "in some things he was a very Christ-like man."[60] Jones says that some Hindus even believed that Gandhi was the incarnation of Christ. He records a conversation of a Hindu with a Christian preacher who preached the second coming of Jesus in a North Indian bazaar. The Hindu man asks the preacher, "Why do you preach the second coming of Christ? He has already come; he is here, Gandhi." Jones further says that in the sphere of life and action Gandhi was second only to Christ.[61] He even interpreted the death of Gandhi as the "greatest tragedy since the Son of God died on the cross."[62] For Jones it was Gandhi who "caught the meaning of the cross and embodied it on a scale that was stupendous."[63] In response to Jones' question as to how to make Christianity naturalized and a part of the national life of India, Gandhi gave four imperatives: (i) All Christians, leaders and all, must begin to live more like Jesus. (ii) You must practice your Christianity without adulterating it or toning it down. (iii) You must lay greater emphasis upon your central principle: love. (iv) You must study more sympathetically non-Christian religions and try to discover the good in them."[64]

57 Ibid., 22.
58 Ibid., 21-42.
59 Ibid., 70.
60 E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Indian Road* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1926), 76.
61 Richard W. Taylor, *The Contribution of E. Stanley Jones* (Chennai: CLS, 1973), 29.
62 Stanley Jones, *Mahatma Gandhi: An Interpretation*, 13.
63 E. Stanley Jones, *Christ at the Round Table* (New York, Abingdon Press, 1928), 145.
64 Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 16, 280.

Ahimsa is one of the major contributions of Gandhi, which Christian political leaders like Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu took seriously. Etymologically *ahimsa* means "not injuring the 'vitality' (*prana,* life) of a living being."[65] Gandhi, interpreting ahimsa, says "that it is not merely a negative state of harmlessness but it is a positive state of love, of doing good even to the evil-doer. But it does not mean helping the evil-doer to continue the wrong or tolerating it by passive acquiescence. On the contrary, love, the active form of ahimsa, requires you to resist the wrongdoer by disassociating yourself from him even though it may offend him or injure him physically... Ahimsa requires deliberate self-suffering, not a deliberate injury of the supposed wrongdoer."[66] Ahimsa is loosely translated into English as *nonviolence*, and in actuality it is much more than that. It is a way of life. Ahimsa is a multifaceted ideology. Nonviolence, "as an ethical philosophy, upholds the view that moral behaviour excludes the use of violence; as a political philosophy it maintains that violence is self-perpetuating and can never provide a means to provide a securely peaceful end. As a principle, it supports the pacifist position that war and killing are never justifiable. As a practice, it has been used by peace lovers to achieve social change and to express resistance to oppression."[67]

Martin Luther King Jr. was another Christian political leader and a theologian who was greatly influenced by Gandhi and his teachings. Although the two never met personally, King was introduced to Gandhi's teachings while at Crozer Theological Seminary. He was popularly known as Black Gandhi. Similar to Gandhi, "King used his religious conviction and belief in non-violence to champion his cause. He transformed himself into voice that appealed to the conscience of whites. He took a philosophical stand that in the final analysis, the white man cannot ignore the Negro problem, because he is part of the

65 Geeta Mehta, *Ahimsa: From Mahavir to Mahatma* (New Delhi: Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, 2008), 1.

66 Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Selections from Gandhi*, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing, 1948), 33-34.

67 Champa Maurya and Anuradha Purohit, "Non-Violent Protest Movement in the World, in *Mahatma Gandhi: Dynamics of Non-Violent Protest Movement*, ed., Rajesh Rawat (Jaipur: Pointer Publishers, 2014), 84.

Negro and the Negro is a part of him. The Negro's agony diminishes the white man, and the Negro's salvation enlarges the white man."[68] His spiritual convictions and principles of non-violence were reasons which brought success in organizing civil rights movement in US. From his childhood he was exposed to racism. His life itself was a life filled with struggle. The immense influence of Mahatma Gandhi and Jesus Christ shaped Martin Luther King into a powerful leader who fought for the rights of his black fraternity. In 1958 King wrote in *Stride Toward Freedom* that his own "pilgrimage to nonviolence" commenced with the realization that "the Christian doctrine of love operating through the Gandhian method of nonviolence was one of the most potent weapons available to [the] oppressed people in their struggle for freedom."[69]

5. Conclusion

The New Testament echoes the eternal love and mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Jesus reveals through his love towards all humanity the true image of God. The New Testament testifies a God who is the embodiment of love which is of great contrast to the God of war and vengeance depicted in the Hebrew Bible. Jesus is the liberator who withstood human violence without retaliating. This influenced Gandhi to the core of his thought. Unlike most creedal Christians, Gandhi was a disciple of Jesus who took the teachings of Jesus seriously. Gandhi took the concept of discipleship into building his ashrams where people could experiment his ideals. All through his life Gandhi experimented various aspects of his understanding of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha*. He did it as an individual and as a community. He was successfully able to communicate his message to the next generation. M. M. Thomas, the noted Indian theologian, calls Gandhi's *satyagraha* as "Christianity in action."[70] Many Indian Christians like Rajkumari Kaur, S. K. George,

68 Munish Kumar Raizada, "Gandhi of US: Martin Luther King," in *Indian American Times* (19-01-2015) in http://www.indiaamericatoday.com/article/gandhi-us-martin-luther-king (accessed on 09-06-2016).

69 Vinay Lal, **"**Guest Editorial: Martin Luther King and the Commitment to Nonviolence," in *Satyagraha Foundation for Nonviolence Studies* (15-07-2016) in http://www.satyagrahafoundation.org/guest-editorial-martin-luther-king-and-the-commitment-to-nonviolence/ (accessed on 20-07-2016).

70 Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of Indian Renaissance*, 219.

and J. C. Kumarappa joined the Gandhian movement and became part of his inner circle.

Anyone who reads the works of Gandhi will agree to the fact that Gandhi was really attached to the poor. He showed selfless love. In order to identify himself to the suffering Indian poor he dressed himself in utter simplicity. In him we can see *agape* in action. Emancipation of the poor, the downtrodden and the oppressed became his vision and mission. He stood for the cause of the untouchables. In the opinion of Gandhi, Thekkinedath says, service of the poor "is the only way to worship and love God."[71] Gandhi lived up to this ideal. For him to love God is expressed in the love of one's neighbour. Gandhi's Hindu upbringing and Jain influence made him to extend his love to life beyond humans. He believed in the organic unity of life and was sympathetic to all aspects of preserving nature. He thus was a staunch vegetarian who experienced God in love for all creatures.

Gandhi has much to give Indian Christians even today. He stressed on the idea of right living. Right living using the methods of Jesus himself becomes the tool of propagating the message of the Gospel. Gandhi gave much importance to the person and teachings of Jesus than to the interpretation of the Church concerning Jesus. For Gandhi the work of Jesus in his life time was more striking than the idea of Jesus' atoning sacrifice on the cross. For Gandhi life of Jesus was more significant than the creedal faith and doctrines which evolved by focusing on the crucifixion of Jesus. Gandhi reflects the praxis of Jesus, a praxis focusing on the emancipation of the helpless, poor, the downtrodden, the needy and the oppressed.

71 Joseph Thekkinedath, *Love of Neighbour in Mahatma Gandhi* (Alwaye: Pontifical Institute of Theology and Philosophy, 1973), 171.

GANDHI'S SARVODAYA AND THE CHURCH'S TEACHING ON THE 'COMMON GOOD'

In Contrast to J.S. Mill's 'Utilitarian Principle'

Bp. Lawrence Pius

Abstract: *According to John Stuart Mill's (1806-73) theory of Utilitarianism happiness is the only intrinsic good, and since more happiness is preferable to less, the goal of the ethical life is to maximize happiness. Many points of criticism can be leveled against Mill's Utilitarianism. For example, in his system morality is analyzed entirely through actions and their consequences, and not through motives or intentions. Mahatma Gandhi while accepting the importance of reason insists that human reason needs to be governed by the Spirit indwelling in the human reason. Moreover, Gandhi's advocacy of the principle of 'Sarvodaya' (the welfare of all), is totally in opposition to the Utilitarian principle of 'the greatest good of the greatest number.' The Church's Social Teaching is unambiguous on the nature of the Common Good. The common good is a foundational principle and is closely intertwined and leads to solidarity. Both Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis argue that the political community's authority is founded on divine sanction and consequently morality must be its guiding force. The good of the weaker section of the humanity must be held to be paramount. Gandhi seems to have anticipated the Church's social teaching on the common good in his own context.*

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Introduction

Divine providence shapes human civilizations slowly and patiently, respecting the freedom to do good or evil, given to humankind, the head of creation on our mother earth. Despite millennia of growth in knowledge and wisdom, human society is not yet at peace with itself around the globe. The gap between the affluent and the poor keeps growing, adding to the misery of millions of our fellow human beings.

Democracy is considered as a great human achievement. The foundations of democracy were laid by some great Western philosophers, among them John Locke and John Stuart Mill. While democracy has its own merits like giving representation to the people's voice in the State, it has not really helped to further the Common Good everywhere. A significant minority in most democratic countries are outside all welfare measures and holistic growth. In the developing countries like India it may be rightly said that even a majority of people do not get all the benefits of the welfare state.

Among the principal causes of such a sad situation is the unsatisfactory system of utilitarian philosophy proposed by J.S. Mill, his predecessors and successors, adopted by selfish politicians all over the world to further their own interests. It was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi who not only perceived the defects of Utilitarianism, but also proposed a suitable alternative to it through his philosophy of *Sarvodaya.* An attempt at unraveling the Gandhian notion of *sarvodaya* will reveal to us that it is precisely what is implied in the Church's social teachings on 'common good.'

This study tries to lay bare the teachings of M. K. Gandhi on *Sarvodaya* and of the Church on 'the Common Good,' against the background of J. S. Mill's principle of Utilitarianism.

1. The Utilitarian Principle of J. S. Mill

John Stuart Mill (1806-73) is well known for his classical text *Utilitarianism* (1861) which is considered "the most influential philosophical articulation of a liberal humanistic morality that was

produced in the nineteenth century."[1] This text was first published as a series of three articles in *Fraser's Magazine* [2] in 1861 which were collected and reprinted as a single book in 1863. Prior to Mill, Jeremy Bentham, the great nineteenth-century legal reformer, had already proposed the principle of Utilitarianism, and in fact he was regarded as the founder of modern utilitarianism. Another influential English utilitarian was William Paley, the author of *The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* (1785).[3] Mill in writing his book claimed that his theory of ethics was the best which he wanted to defend against a wide range of criticisms and misunderstandings.

Bentham had put forward the utilitarian principle that "it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong."[4] In support of this principle of his master, J.S. Mill argues thus: Since happiness is the only intrinsic good, and since more happiness is preferable to less, the goal of the ethical life is to maximize happiness. Happiness is the only thing humans do and should desire for its own sake. This is what both Mill and Bentham call 'the principle of utility' or 'the greatest-happiness principle.'

Here it must be kept in mind that Bentham and Mill equate happiness with pleasure, and endorse 'classical' or 'hedonistic' forms of utilitarianism. Thus ethical theory is based upon the psychological theory of hedonism. However, they claim to reform the purely hedonistic theory in this that they want to elevate human life and further human progress. Earlier hedonism was egoistic and was based on the principle that every human seeks pleasure and avoids pain. But Bentham and Mill claim that their theory is altruistic. Hence their emphasis is on "the greatest happiness of the greatest number." They hold that all humans possess self-regarding and other-regarding

1 J. B. Schneewind, "John Stuart Mill," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed., Paul Edwards, vol. 5 (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 319.

2 *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* was a general and literary journal, founded by Hugh Fraser and William Maginn in 1830 and was published in London from 1830 to 1882.

3 A reprint of the 1785 edition of London was made by Garland Publisher, New York in 1811.

4 Jeremy Bentham. *A Fragment on Government (*London: T. Payne, 1776), "Preface" (2nd paragraph.).

impulses in varying degrees. While the emotional satisfaction of an individual may be centered on self-regarding impulses, reason impels a person to reconcile one's self-regarding impulses with one's other-regarding impulses. Thus by 'the general happiness' they mean the general welfare rather than general pleasure. And it is in this connection that the individual is enabled to become other-regarding and to seek his own happiness in general happiness through sanctions like law, public opinion and religion.

No doubt, Mill differed from Bentham and tried to develop a more refined form of understanding pleasure so as to include intellectual pleasures such as the pleasures of friendship, art, reading, and conversation. These pleasures, he held, are higher and more desirable kinds of pleasures than bodily pleasures, and that a rational pursuit of one's long-term happiness requires development of one's higher faculties. Thus J.S. Mill's utilitarianism highlights the importance of intellectual pleasures like self-development, high ideals of character and conventional moral rules in ethical life. He also upholds the traditional moral rules such as "Keep your promises" and "Tell the truth," because they have been shown by long experience to promote the welfare of society, and so, we should normally follow such 'secondary principles' without reflecting much on the consequences of our acts. As a rule, according to him, it is necessary (or wise) to appeal to the principle of utility directly only when such second-tier principles conflict.

Many points of criticism may be leveled against J.S. Mill's utilitarianism. First of all it is very questionable that one can speak of aggregates as having desires, or that something is desired proves that it is desirable. Although Mill thinks that he is refining the idea of pleasure more comprehensively by including into it intellectual pleasures etc., yet, one's intellect may itself be so degenerate that one may seek for happiness which is merely self-centered, giving it hundred and one reasons, in support of one's own egoistic pleasures.

Moreover, the faculty of Reason in humankind is such an ambiguous one that it can argue either for or against any point of contention. With such an ambiguous faculty how could it prove to be decisive in

highlighting the other-regarding impulses in individuals? So, if one is already bent upon achieving a particular pleasure (and that too, purely a selfish pleasure), then one's 'Reason' can concoct a number of reasons in support of achieving that one as right. Or, if one is determined to take an opposite point of view one may invent numerous reasons for supporting that particular point of view as against the other, as it happens in debates. Hence, Mill's argument relies on a dubious assumption that one's Reason is able to regulate individual happiness for obtaining the general happiness.

Even granted that an individual is able to make the right use of Reason, will it be sufficient for guaranteeing the achievement of the greatest happiness of the greater number? There might be times when the general happiness can be achieved only by *sacrificing* the happiness of certain individuals. In such cases, will the general happiness prove good to those individuals? Unless those individuals *voluntarily* and *happily* sacrifice their happiness for the sake of general happiness, their right use of Reason will not contribute to the general happiness at all. For making that voluntary sacrifice one needs to exercise a still higher faculty than mere Reason. It is the function of the *soul* alone to forego one's comforts or even one's rights, and to willfully accept deprivation, suffering and even death for the sake of common good.

Finally, it must be observed that in Mill's thought morality is analyzed entirely through actions and their consequences, and not through motives or intentions. The majority happiness may best be served by the oppression or exclusion of some weak groups. Minority communities will be permanent losers. In the present context around the world, political leaders seem to compromise on everything to hold on and wield power. Even the 'happiness for the majority' is sacrificed for 'happiness for the powerful alone,' leaving both the minorities and the helpless millions of the poor population to wallow in abject conditions.

2. The Sarvodaya of Mahatma Gandhi

The principal points of criticism raised against utilitarian ethics of J.S. Mill in the foregoing section are all taken care of by M.K. Gandhi.

It is here that Gandhi clearly scores over Mill. First of all, Gandhi recognizes the possibility of human Reason playing a degenerate and ambiguous role. Therefore Gandhi does not ascribe to Reason in human beings supreme authority. Even granted the right use of reason is there, it needs to be vindicated through suffering which is characteristic of the human soul. Then only reason would have any power over others. "I have found that mere appeal to reason does not answer where prejudices are age-long and based on supposed religious authority. Reason has to be strengthened by suffering,"[5] Gandhi said. The power of suffering is unique to human beings because they have the Spirit (soul) within, which alone can volunteer to suffer for vindication of the truth of reason, and thereby to appeal to others. While reason might propose a just war theory and lead people to confront with others, yet may not succeed, the soul's appeal through suffering could win the heart of even the opponent. Suffering is the law of human beings as war is the law of the jungle. But suffering is infinitely more powerful than the law of the jungle for converting the opponent and opening his ears, which are otherwise shut, to the voice of reason….I have come to this fundamental conclusion that if you want something really important to be done, you must not merely satisfy the reason, you must move the heart also. The appeal of reason is more to the head, but the penetration of the heart comes from suffering. It opens up the inner understanding of man. Suffering is the badge of the human race, not the sword.[6]

According to Gandhi, human Reason needs to be governed by the Spirit indwelling in the human. It cannot be taken for granted to be a deciding authority of one's behaviour. Unless Reason is regulated by a higher principle, namely, the Spirit within, there is no hope of the Reason being a compelling force for aligning self-regarding impulses with other-regarding impulses and much less achieving greater happiness. It is precisely because of the predominance of the governance by Spirit that Gandhi is able to draw the power of suffering as a weapon of the brave to fight against injustice.

5 *Harijan,* January, 1942, as cited by Raghavan N. Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi, Oxford Paperback, 2000), 288.

6 *India's Case for Swaraj* (Yeshanad Co. 1932), 369, as cited by Raghavan N. Iyer, *op. cit*., 287.

Above all, Gandhi's advocacy of the principle of '*sarvodaya'* is totally in opposition to the utilitarian principle of 'greatest good of the greatest number.' The term *sarvodaya* is a compound word combining two Sanskrit words *sarva* (all) and *udaya* (rising or reaching one's aim, meaning the 'rise of all.' The term 'all' indicates all living beings. This is directly opposed to the utilitarian ideal of the greatest happiness of the greatest number. First of all, the goal of *sarvodaya* is not happiness in the sense of a feeling of pleasure, but the all round wellbeing or welfare. Secondly it is the wellbeing not of the majority but of all. According to Utilitarian ethics, end justifies means. But according to Gandhi *sarvodaya* can be achieved only by pure means, even if it involves one's death: 'a votary of ahimsa cannot subscribe to the utilitarian formula. He will strive for the greatest good of all and die in the attempt to realize the ideal. He will therefore be willing to die, so that others may live. He will save himself with the rest by himself dying… (whereas) the utilitarian will never sacrifice himself.[7] Here immediately the question will arise: Why should one sacrifice oneself for the sake of others. It is difficult to bridge the gulf between egoism and altruism unless a principle is recognized in the individual which could be the basis of a transcendence of the individual. That, according to Gandhi, is provided by Vedanta Philosophy.

I believe in *Advaita.* I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives. Therefore I believe that if one man gains spiritually that whole world gains with him and if one man fails the whole world fails to that extent.[8]

This spiritual unity which forms the basis for Gandhian *sarvodaya* principle is precisely what is wanting in the overall utilitarian approach of the modern West, conveniently adopted by selfish politicians all over the world to further their own interests. Gandhi was aware of the fact that there were also some thinkers in the West who were opposing the utilitarian principle of benefitting the 'greatest' number of the community. One such exception was John Ruskin.

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7 *Young India*, (9.2.1926), 432; as quoted in T.S. Devadoss, *Sarvodaya and the Problem of Political Sovereignty*, (Madras: University of Madras, 1974), 122.

8 *Young India*, (4.12. 1932), 398; cf., T.S. Devadoss, 123.

John Ruskin (1819-1900) was the leading English art-critic and art-patron of the Victorian era, a prominent social thinker and philanthropist. He wrote on a variety of subjects. Following his crisis of faith, and influenced in part by his friend Thomas Carlyle, Ruskin's emphasis shifted from art towards social issues from the end of the 1850s. In his own words in 1877 he said that in 1860 "I gave up my art work and wrote *Unto This Last* ... the central work of my life." He now dissected the orthodox political economy espoused by John Stuart Mill, based on theories of laissez-faire and competition. In his four essays, *Unto This Last*, Ruskin rejected the division of labour as dehumanizing (separating labourer from his product), and argued that the 'science' of political economy failed to consider the social affections that bind communities together. Ruskin, drawing on Plato and Xenophon, articulated an extended metaphor of household and family, to demonstrate the *communitarian* and sometimes *sacrificial nature* of true economics. The essays were originally published in consecutive monthly installments of the new *Cornhill Magazine* between August and November 1860 and were later published in a single volume in 1862.

When Gandhi happened to read his book, *Unto This Last,* he was so captivated by 'the magic spell of the book' that he was transformed by it overnight. He changed his life in accordance with the ideals of the book.[9] Sacrificing his comfortable city life, he started a commune to live on a farm, working as a peasant and handicraftsman and contributing his cooperative labour to the common good of the commune.

Gandhi decoded the book also to propagate the same ideals to as many people as possible. So, he put the main tenets of the book in his own mother tongue, giving it a title *'Sarvodaya.'* The reason for giving it that title was itself to show his opposition to the utilitarian principle of J.S. Mill and his companions:

> What follows is not a translation of *Unto This Last* but a paraphrase, as a translation would not be particularly useful to the readers of

9 M.K. Gandhi, *Autobiography* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1927), first edition, IV/XVIII.

> *Indian Opinion*. Even the title has not been translated but paraphrased as *Sarvodaya* [the welfare of all], as that was what Ruskin aimed at in writing this book, (that is, the advancement of all and not merely of the greatest number).[10]

Gandhi refers to the defects of utilitarian principle clearly in the 'Preface' of his book thus:

> People in the West generally hold that the whole duty of man is to promote the happiness of the majority of mankind, and happiness is supposed to mean *only physical happiness and economic prosperity*. If the laws of morality are broken in the conquest of this happiness, it does not matter very much. Again, as the object sought to be attained is the happiness of the majority, Westerners do not think there is any harm if this is secured by sacrificing a minority. The consequences of this line of thinking are writ large on the face of Europe. This exclusive search for physical and economic well-being prosecuted in disregard of morality is contrary to divine law, as some wise men in the West have shown. One of these was John Ruskin who contends in *Unto This Last* that men can be happy only if they obey the moral law.[11]

Still more clearly Gandhi spelt out his contrasting stance to the utilitarian principle in a letter which he wrote to a friend in 1932:

> I do not believe in the doctrine of the greatest good of the greatest number. It means in its nakedness that in order to achieve the supposed good of fifty-one percent the interest of forty-nine percent may be, or rather should be, sacrificed. It is a heartless doctrine and has done harm to humanity. The only real, dignified, human doctrine is the greatest good of all, and this can be achieved only by uttermost self-sacrifice.[12]

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10 M.K. Gandhi, *Indian Opinion*, May 16, 1908. These articles are compiled into a book: M.K. Gandhi, *Ruskin Unto This Last: A Paraphrase*, transd. into the Gujarati by Valji Govindji Desai, Published by Jitenedra Desai, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 2007, http://www.mkgandhi.org/ebks/untothislast.pdf, accessed on 2.6. 2016.

11 M. K. Gandhi, *Ruskin Unto This Last A Paraphrase* (emphasis added).

12 M.K. Gandhi, "Letter to an Indian Friend," July 4, 1932, in *The Diary of Mahadev Desai-I*, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1953), 149.

Thus, Gandhi's *sarvodaya* meant indeed 'the welfare of all' or the common good which is directly in opposition to the majoritarian interest of the utilitarian principle. Service unto the least of human beings nay of the creatures was intimately connected with the ultimate aim of human life. In *Harijan,* an English weekly he had founded, Gandhi wrote as follows:

> Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God and all his activities, social, political, religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all. I am a part and parcel of the whole and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of humanity.[13]

The *sarvodaya* principle was not simply a theoretical principle for Gandhi. It was life-transforming principle, what in today's terminology we would call a praxis-oriented maxim. Personally it was so for Gandhi's life. Even as late as 1946 he could emphatically affirm this: "I stand by what is implied in the phrase, '*Unto This Last*.' That book marked the turning point in my life. We must do even unto this last as we would have the world do by us." [14]

Even Gandhi's entry into the politics was his deep yearning to serve the least of humanity and establish only the 'common good.' "And I know that God is found more often in the lowliest of His creatures than in the high and mighty. I am struggling to reach the status of these. I cannot do so without their service; hence my passion for the service of the suppressed classes. And as I cannot render this service without entering politics I find myself in them."[15]

Gandhi wanted the welfare of every citizen to be safeguarded and nurtured. He suggested devolution of power to the smallest of political units, the '*Gram Panchayats*' (communes). In *Young India* of 2nd July

13 *Harijan,* (29.08.1936), 226; Sriman Narayan, ed., *The Voice of Truth* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House), 114.

14 *Harijan,* (17.11.1946), 404. For a more accessible source, Sriman Narayan, ed., 533.

15 *Harijan,* (11.2.1924), 298; Sriman Narayan, ed., 533.

1931, another journal that Gandhi edited, he quotes Henry David Thoreau, the great American non-conformist: "That government is best which governs the least."[16] On the part of the citizens they must all perform their duties conscientiously. For Gandhi rights and duties were two sides of the same coin. That is why he mused as follows: "The true source of rights is duty. If we all discharge our duties, rights will not be far to seek. If leaving duties unperformed, we run after rights, they will escape us like a will-o'-the-wisp. The more we pursue them, the farther will they fly."[17]

3. Church's Doctrine on the Common Good

The Church's social teaching is unambiguous on the nature of the common good. The common good is a foundational principle and is closely intertwined with human dignity and leads to solidarity. Because we are created as social beings, individual rights need to be experienced within the context of promotion of the common good.

Contrary to the cultural bias of our time, the long-standing Christian conviction is that what one deserves can only be properly determined within a framework that takes the common good and the needs of the poor into account. This traditional conviction is indeed rooted in biblical, patristic and medieval thought. Pope John Paul II updated it in a way that addresses the realities of today's high-tech, knowledge-based economy. Just as Gandhi upheld that political economy needs to be governed by moral law and not simply by the utilitarian principle of pleasure, Pope John Paul II's magisterium also asserts that the cause of the present malaise is moral sin:

> …Consequently, economic activity is to be carried on according to its own methods and laws within the limits of *the moral order*, so that God's plan for mankind may be realized… Economic development must remain under man's determination and must not be left to the judgment of a *few men* or *groups* possessing too much economic power or of the political community alone or of certain more

16 *Young India*, (2.7.1931), 162; Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Selections from Gandhi,* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House,1948), 41.

17 *Young India*, (8. 1.1925), 15, as reported in Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Selections from Gandhi,* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1948), 37.

> powerful nations. It is necessary, on the contrary, that at every level the largest possible number of people and, when it is a question of international relations, all nations have an active share in directing that development. There is need as well of the coordination and fitting and harmonious combination of the spontaneous efforts of individuals and of free groups with the undertakings of public authorities.[18]

In terms of international relationships, the Pope declares that it is lack of political will to strive to craft an international order that is the cause of the disorder in society, instead of carving a society marked by the fullness of love, compassion and peace.

> It is important to note therefore that a world which is divided into blocs, sustained by rigid ideologies, and in which instead of interdependence and solidarity different forms of imperialism hold sway can only be a world subject to structures of sin. The sum total of the negative factors working against a true awareness of the universal common good, and the need to further it, gives the impression of creating, in persons and institutions, an obstacle which is difficult to overcome. …If the present situation can be attributed to difficulties of various kinds, it is not out of place to speak of 'structures of sin,' which…are rooted in personal sin, and thus always linked to the concrete acts of individuals who introduce these structures, consolidate them and make them difficult to remove. And thus they grow stronger, spread, and become the source of other sins, and so influence people's behavior. …Man's condition is such that a more profound analysis of individuals' actions and omissions cannot be achieved without implying, in one way or another, judgments or references of an ethical nature.[19]

In today's context of globalization Pope Francis is perceptive of the new form of utilitarianism affecting the minority states, which he describes as a new tyranny.

While the earnings of a minority are growing exponentially, so too is the gap separating the majority from the prosperity enjoyed by those happy few. This imbalance is the result of ideologies which defend the absolute autonomy of the marketplace and financial speculation.

18 John Paul II, The Encyclical on The Social Concern of the Church, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (*1987), 64 c – 65 a.

19 *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis,* 36.

Consequently, they reject the right of states, charged with vigilance for the common good, to exercise any form of control. A new tyranny is thus born, invisible and often virtual, which unilaterally and relentlessly imposes its own laws and rules. Debt and the accumulation of interest also make it difficult for countries to realize the potential of their own economies and keep citizens from enjoying their real purchasing power. To all this we can add widespread corruption and self-serving tax evasion, which have taken on worldwide dimensions. The thirst for power and possessions knows no limits. In this system, which tends to devour everything which stands in the way of increased profits, whatever is fragile, like the environment, is defenseless before the interests of a deified market, which become the only rule.[20]

Hence, the real solution lies only in giving up of the moral evil on the one hand and positively taking to the cultivation of the virtue of solidarity. Pope John Paul's magisterium says:

> It is above all a question of interdependence, sensed as a system determining relationships in the contemporary world, in its economic, cultural, political and religious elements, and accepted as a moral category. When interdependence becomes recognized in this way, the correlative response as a moral and social attitude, as a 'virtue,' is solidarity. This then is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering *determination to commit oneself to the common good;* that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.[21]

This determination is based on the solid conviction that what is hindering full development is that desire for profit and that thirst for power by a few vested interests which are hindering full development. So the magisterium declares, just as Gandhi did, that cultivation of a diametrically opposed attitude is imperative: a commitment to the good of one's neighbour with the readiness, in the Gospel sense, to 'lose oneself' for the sake of the other instead of exploiting him, and to 'serve him' instead of oppressing him for one's own advantage:

20 Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evanagelii Gaudium*, 56.

21 *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 38a & b.

> These attitudes and 'structures of sin' are only conquered—presupposing the help of divine grace—by a diametrically opposed attitude: a commitment to the good of one's neighbor with the readiness, in the gospel sense, to 'lose oneself' for the sake of the other instead of exploiting him, and to 'serve him' instead of oppressing him for one's own advantage (cf. Mt 10: 40-42; 20: 25; Mk 10: 42-45; Lk 22: 25-27).[22]

And at the international arena it would involve sacrificing of the imperialistic structures, according to the Church's social teachings:

> In this way, the solidarity which we propose is the path to peace and at the same time to development. For world peace is inconceivable unless the world's leaders come to recognize that interdependence in itself demands the abandonment of the politics of blocs, *the sacrifice of all forms of economic, military or political imperialism*, and the transformation of mutual distrust into collaboration. This is precisely the act proper to solidarity among individuals and nations.[23]

Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium,* in order to safeguard the common good, demands the Church's involvement in the removal of structural injustice, along with changing the attitudes and convictions of people:

> The Church, guided by the Gospel of mercy and by love for mankind, hears the cry for justice and intends to respond to it with all her might…it means working to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and to promote the integral development of the poor, as well as small daily acts of solidarity in meeting the real needs which we encounter. The word "solidarity" …refers to something more than a few sporadic acts of generosity. It presumes the creation of a new mindset which thinks in terms of community and the priority of the *life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few*…Changing structures without generating new convictions and attitudes will only ensure that those same structures will become, sooner or later, corrupt, oppressive and ineffectual.[24]

22 *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 38c.
23 *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 39.
24 Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evanagelii Gaudium* (2013), 188-89.

Gandhi not only considered common good as a moral duty, but also as something that is intimately connected with the religious goal. Pope Francis says that the religious goal cannot be restricted to private life but to work for the common good of the community and each member.

> …The task of evangelization implies and demands the integral promotion of *each human* being. It is no longer possible to claim that religion should be restricted to the private sphere and that it exists only to prepare souls for heaven. We know that God wants his children to be happy in this world too, even though they are called to fulfilment in eternity, for he has created all things "for our enjoyment" (1 Tim 6:17), the *enjoyment of everyone.* It follows that Christian conversion demands reviewing especially those areas and aspects of life related to the social order and the pursuit of the common good.[25]

Essential to the common good is participation by all in all spheres of society. The human person has a right not to be shut out from participating in those institutions that are necessary for human fulfilment. The social nature of the person requires that structures of both the civil society and the state allow full human growth and development. All of society is responsible for public order (that part of the common good which involves public peace, minimum standards of justice and public morality). All people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable. This was taken into consideration already by the Vatican Council II:

> In view of the increasingly close ties of mutual dependence today between all the inhabitants and peoples of the earth, the apt pursuit and efficacious attainment of the universal common good now require of the community of nations that it organize itself in a manner suited to its present responsibilities, especially toward the many parts of the world which are still suffering from unbearable want.[26]

Just as Gandhi thought of rights only in the context of duty, John Paul II's magisterium also asserts the following:

> Citizens, on the other hand, should remember that it is their right and duty, which is also to be recognized by the civil authority, to

25 *Evanagelii Gaudium*, 182.

26 *Gaudium et Spes,* 84.

> contribute to the true progress of their own community according to their ability. Especially in underdeveloped areas, where all resources must urgently be employed, those who hold back their unproductive resources or who deprive their community of the material or spiritual aid that it needs—save the personal right of migration—gravely endanger the common good.[27]

Again, just as Gandhi came to realize that his entry into politics was necessary to achieve *sarvodaya,* so too the Second Vatican Council clearly recognized the role of the political community in establishing the common good of all:

> The political community exists, consequently, for the sake of the common good, in which it finds its full justification and significance, and the source of its inherent legitimacy. Indeed, the common good embraces the sum of those conditions of the social life whereby men, families and associations more adequately and readily may attain their own perfection….If the political community is not to be torn apart while everyone follows his own opinion, there must be an authority to direct the energies of all citizens toward the common good, not in a mechanical or despotic fashion, but by acting above all as a moral force which appeals to each one's freedom and sense of responsibility.[28]

Furthermore, just as Gandhi contended that the political community's authority is founded on divine sanction and consequently morality must be its guiding force, Vatican II asserts:

> It is clear, therefore, that the political community and public authority are founded on human nature and hence belong to the order designed by God, even though the choice of a political regime and the appointment of rulers are left to the free will of citizens…It follows also that political authority, both in the community as such and in the representative bodies of the state, must always be exercised within the limits of the moral order and directed toward the common good—with a dynamic concept of that good—according to the juridical order legitimately established or due to be established.[29]

27 *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 65 c.
28 *Gaudium et Spes*, 74: 1& 2.
29 *Gaudium et Spes*, 74: 3.

Finally just as Gandhi's *sarvodaya* meant not only the common good of the humanity but of all the creatures as well, the latest magisterium by Pope Francis urges us to act for the preservation of the eco-system for posterity:

> There are other weak and defenseless beings who are frequently at the mercy of economic interests or indiscriminate exploitation. I am speaking of creation as a whole. We human beings are not only the beneficiaries but also the stewards of other creatures. ... Let us not leave in our wake a swath of destruction and death which will affect our own lives and those of future generations….God intended this land for us, his special creatures, but not so that we might destroy it and turn it into a wasteland… After a single night's rain, look at the chocolate brown rivers in your locality and remember that they are carrying the life blood of the land into the sea… How can fish swim in sewers like the Pasig and so many more rivers which we have polluted? Who has turned the wonder world of the seas into underwater cemeteries bereft of color and life?[30]

Pope Francis is humble enough to acknowledge that the Church does not have answers to every problem. Precisely because of this she is ready to get into dialogue with those who have already set the path:

> In her dialogue with the State and with society, the Church does not have solutions for every particular issue. Together with the various sectors of society, she supports those programmes which best respond to the dignity of each person and the common good. In doing this, she proposes in a clear way the fundamental values of human life and convictions which can then find expression in political activity.[31]

Pope Francis even implores God to give us politicians who would be genuinely interested in the common good:

> I beg the Lord to grant us more politicians who are genuinely disturbed by the state of society, the people, the lives of the poor! It is vital that government leaders and financial leaders take heed and broaden their horizons, working to ensure that all citizens have dignified work, education and healthcare. Why not turn to God and ask him to inspire

30 *Evangelii Gaudium,* 215.
31 *Evangelii Gaudium*, 241.

> their plans? I am firmly convinced that openness to the transcendent can bring about a new political and economic mind-set which would help to break down the wall of separation between the economy and the common good of society.[32]

Conclusion

From the foregoing it is clear that Gandhi echoes the Social Teaching of the Church on common good. Rather one can say that Gandhi has anticipated the Church's Social Teaching on the common good in his own context.

It is our good fortune that God had already answered the Popes' prayers in advance by providing a person like Mahatma Gandhi. It is up to us today to take Gandhi seriously and try to follow his footsteps in our own context.

It is indeed laudable that Dr. A. Pushparajan has understood the great value of Gandhi's thought to live his Christian commitment. Not only does he find Gandhi as a suitable model for establishing dialogue between the Church and the State, between religion and politics, but also he sees in Gandhi a viable tool of analysis for contextualizing social teachings and for implementing the Christian message of establishing the Reign of God on earth. I have known Dr. Pushparajan for over twenty years. He is an utterly convinced Gandhian. He brings the Gandhian perspective in all his writings (which are voluminous), innumerable talks and classes. His strict adherence the vow of silence on Fridays is but one example of his practicing the Gandhian ideal in daily life. This *Festschrift* in honour of Dr. Pushparajan cannot have come at a better and more fitting time.

In sum, it may be a worthwhile exercise for us to ponder such questions as the following: What can we do in our surroundings and situations to implement the Social Teaching of the Church for the Common Good? How can the ACPI (Association of Christian Philosophers of India) help in propagating the urgent messages of the present and earlier Popes for the welfare of humanity, after the Indian exemplar of such an implementation?

32 *Evangelii Gaudium,* 205.

CHURCH AS COMMUNION
A Call for Wider Communion

Soosai Devaraj[1]

Abstract: *India is a womb of many religious. From time immemorial the people belonging to various religious traditions lived together in peace and harmony. But in the recent past communalism has emerged as a crucial problem which has been endangering the harmonious life of the innocent people. Religious conflicts and rivalries are tearing the country apart in various ways. Taking serious stock of the emergent situation, the church, the community of the disciples of Jesus Christ, is called upon to promote interreligious dialogue and fellowship with the view to building up authentic human communities marked by love, justice, fellowship and fraternity. The core element of the Church is communion. Therefore, it is imperative that it goes beyond the denominational, religious and ethnic borders to embrace everyone in the society as children of one God. Today dialogue has to be initiated and promoted at all levels. Building up of wider communion is the call the Holy Spirit.*

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Vatican II was a new Pentecost which renewed the face of the Church. One important change that has taken place in the field of ecclesiology since the Council is the shift of emphasis from the universal Church to the local Church. History bears out that for several centuries the Church

1 It is a great honour and pleasure to contribute this article highlighting a new way of being for the Church in the multi-religious context of India, in grateful recognition of the marvelous and meritorious contributions made in the fields of Interreligious Dialogue, Gandhian Spirituality, Theology and Philosophy for the past several years, by Prof. Dr. A. Pushparajan.

was immersed in a highly centralistic and monolithic conception, which hampered the growth of the local Churches to a large extent. The Council's rediscovery of the local Church as a result of its relentless effort to renew the face of the Church in accordance with the vision of the New Testament and the emergent signs of the time has generated enthusiasm in Asia, especially India to construct authentic local Churches, taking into account its context. As a result, today we witness in India an ongoing discussion on the life and mission of the local Church by engaging in dialogue with the poor, other religious traditions and culture. In particular, we take up the dialogue with other religions for our study due to the fact that the multi-religious situation in our homeland poses immense problems and challenges for the past several years. Unlike the Western countries, religious pluralism is an existential phenomenon and also a day-to-day experience of every citizen in the country. Moreover, at times the multi-religious situation becomes more conflictual and confrontational rather than peaceful and cordial. Conflicts could tend to widen the gap between the religions, as each one seeks to affirm its identity and difference. It is a fact that there can be no peace in the Indian society without peace between religions. Taking serious stock of the emerging situation of conflicts and rivalries, the Church in India as the community of the Disciples of Christ has been called upon to become an agent of peace and harmony by promotion of dialogue and collaboration among religions.[2] It is noteworthy that Dr A. Pushparajan has taken concerted efforts for building up of an authentic local church in the multi-religious context of India by promoting inter-religious dialogue and fellowship.[3]

1. Communion: The Core Element of the Church

Humans are not scattered individuals living in isolation or solitude. They are essentially community beings. They are born in a family, grow up in a society and live with others till the end of their life. Community or communion is a fundamental dimension of human

2 Cf., A. Pushparajan, *Madangal Thedum Manitham,* (Madurai: Dept. of Interreligious Relations & Commission for Dialogue, 1999), 177-227.

3 Madurai Anand, ed., *Palasthinam muthal Pandiyanadu varai* (From Palestine to Pandiya Kingdom:The Indian, Tamilnadu and Madurai Church history), (Madurai: Archdiocesan Platinum Jubilee Publications, 2013), 411-30.

existence, and a basic human longing. More than ever before, today there is among people, a real longing for a life of communion and fellowship, as they are living in a society torn apart by communalism, casteism and religious fundamentalism. Only in the company of fellow human persons can they find happiness and fulfillment. In mutual sharing and in concern for others they find happiness and contentment. This longing for communion is exactly the concern of God, particularly of Jesus Christ whose very purpose was to bring all people into a community of love and fellowship by establishing the Kingdom of God in this world. Therefore the Church, founded by Him, is called upon to become a community of disciples bound together in communion.

'Communion' is the central element of the ecclesiology of Vatican II. Leaving aside the intuitional, authoritative and juridical character of the Church, it underscores the communitarian dimension of the people of God. This awakening of the Church as a communion could be called a historical necessity, as some theologians even before the Council had paved a way towards this theological orientation and made a clarion call that the Church should become a community of disciples committed to the mission of Christ.[4] Walter Kasper points out, "Together with the biblical, liturgical, patristic and pastoral revival which took place in the first half of the century, the awakening of the idea of the Church as communion provided the historical pre-condition for the Second Vatican Council, and for its ecclesiological renewal. One of the guiding ideas of the last Council—perhaps the guiding idea—was *communio* or communion."[5] The Extraordinary Synod of Bishops held in 1985, marking the 20th anniversary of the closing of Vatican II, observed: "The ecclesiology of communion is the central and fundamental idea of the Council's documents."[6]

4 For the rediscovery of the Church as communion, the following works are important: Yves Congar, *Divided Christendom: A Catholic Study of the Problem of Reunion* (London: The Centenary Press, 1939); Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: A Study of Dogma in Relation to the Corporate Destiny of Mankind*, (London: Burns & Oates, 1950); Jerome Hamer, *The Church Is a Communion,* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1964).

5 Walter Kasper, *Theology and Church* (London: SCM Press, 1989), 149.

6 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, *Message to the People of God and the Final Report*, (Washington: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1986), 17.

In the ecclesial vision of the Council, communion is the very nature and foundational character of the Church. It can be called the mystery of the Church. The Church is a sacrament of unity and communion—communion of believers with God and among themselves under the impulse and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Communion is basically a participation or sharing in the life of God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit—a divine life that is fostered by the Spirit of God. All the members share in "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit" (2 Cor 13:14). They are brought into fellowship with the Triune God and participate in the divine nature by virtue of baptism.[7] Sharing in the divine life is experienced in a special way in the Eucharist. This life of communion is the basis for the equality and dignity of all the faithful and for their responsibility of building up the Church.[8]

2. Rediscovery of the Local Church

We can say that the Council's rediscovery of the Church as communion or *koinonia* led to the rediscovery of the local Church. It is a fact that Vatican II was primarily focused on the Universal Church. But one of the great achievements it made was the recovery of the ecclesial significance of the local Church which had been completely lost in the Western Church. The Council, affirming that the communion of believers in a locality is the Church of Christ, declared: "The Church of Christ is really present in all legitimately organized local groups of the faithful, which in so far as they are united to their pastors, are also quite appropriately called Churches in the New Testament."[9] It is a community of believers, which proclaims the message of the Kingdom of God, celebrates the Eucharist and other sacraments, practices love and fellowship and continues the liberative mission of Christ in a particular socio-economic and cultural context. This recovery was supported by the scholarship on the early Christian communities which brought to light that the Church was local by character. The word *ekklesia* was used first to refer to the Christian community of a given region or city, in accordance with its original Greek, namely the assembly of citizens in a city to decide matters affecting the Church.

7 *Lumen Gentium,* Nos. 7, 11.
8 *Lumen Gentium,* No. 32.
9 *Lumen Gentium*, No, 26.

This recovery has enabled the contemporary Christians to experience that the Church is "always first of all a concrete reality, *this* group of men and women, at *this* time, and in *this* place, within *this* culture, responding to the Word and grace by which God gathers them in Christ."[10]

3. Local Church: A Community of Fellowship

Drawing inspiration from the ecclesiology of Vatican II, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference firmly affirmed that the local Church is basically a communion. It is a "communion in the Spirit, a community of sharing and fellowship, of witness and service."[11] The *koinonia* is its fundamental character. The local Church, envisaged as communion or *koinonia* has a twofold dimension, namely vertical and horizontal. Communion is basically a participation or sharing in the life of God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit—a divine life fostered by the Spirit of God. The Church becomes local, only when the saving event of Jesus Christ takes root in a particular situation with all its social, cultural and other characteristics, which makes up the life and thought of the people living in that place. The new life offered by the Christ event is the life of communion. It is a life of communion with God the Father in fellowship with the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. This communion with the Triune God is the source and foundation of the local Church.

The vertical dimension of communion, as described above, is bound to lead to the horizontal dimension. The participation in the life of communion with the Triune God fosters among the members of the local Church a bond of solidarity and fellowship. It forms them into a Church of God gathered in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and makes them all brothers and sisters to one another. Since all proclaim the same faith, share the same Word of God and participate in the same sacraments, all are called upon to love one another, participate in the joys and sufferings of one another and particularly care for the

10 Joseph Komonchak, "The Church Universal, as the Communion of Local Churches," *Concilium* 46 (1981), 32.

11 Asian Colloquium, "Ministries in the Church," in *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 1970 to 1991,* Vol. I, ed., Gaudencio B. Rosales and C. G. Arevalo (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1987), 72. Hereafter cited as *FAPA,* Vol. I.

oppressed and marginalized among them. Each member assumes responsibility for the welfare of all in the community. "Openness to one another in sharing, mutual concern and self-giving, attitudes of being *with* others and *for* others, making the joys and sorrows of the community truly their own" are some of the indispensable characteristics to be nurtured in the local Churches as pointed out by the bishops in their Statement of the Third Plenary Assembly.[12]

4. Local Church: An Open Community

As noted above, the Church is basically a community of baptized persons. Baptism is a sacrament of rebirth and new creation through which a person is incorporated into *ecclesia*, the body of Christ and becomes officially its member. Till Vatican II, the Church remained a closed or exclusive community imbibing sectarian spirit or ghetto attitude. So much so it was officially held that salvation could be possible only through the Catholic Church. For instance, the Council of Florence (1438-45) unequivocally declared: "The Council believes, confesses and preaches that no one remaining outside the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews, heretics or schismatics, can become partakers of eternal life, …"[13] After many years of hostility, a new era of openness and dialogue has dawned after the Council of Vatican II. The Council, taking into account the changing situation and positive approach emerging in the world at large, officially recognized the positive and authentic values of other religious traditions: "The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those percepts and teachings which enlighten all men… The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men."[14]

12 Third Plenary Assembly, "The Church – A Community of Faith in Asia," in *FAPA*, Vol. I, 57.

13 J. Neuner and J. Dupuis, *The Christian Faith* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India,1996), 383.

14 Vatican II, Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate* , 2.

It is to be noted that this changed attitude of the Church since Vatican II has made a tremendous impact on the Asian bishops. They acknowledged the significant role of religions in shaping the lives of the people and also to view them from a positive theological perspective. Diversity of religious faiths and spiritual traditions is part of God's salvific plan for humanity. In their very First Plenary Assembly, they stated: "In this dialogue we accept them (religions) as significant and positive elements in the economy of God's design of salvation. In them we recognize and respect profound spiritual and ethical meanings and values and acknowledge that God has drawn our peoples to Himself through them.[15] The unfathomable and inexhaustible mystery of God finds finite forms of self-manifestation in diverse ways. "The religious traditions are the expressions of the presence of God's Word and of the universal action of God's Spirit in them."[16] More significantly, the bishops acknowledge the revelatory and salvific character of Asian religions: "The ancient religions of the orient… have been for us in Asia the doorway to God."[17] "God's saving will is at work in many different ways in all these religions."[18] "God has drawn our peoples to Himself through them." Therefore, the religions are means of God's saving work in the pluralistic world. Human persons and communities respond to this one universal call of the Spirit in diverse ways: "The great religions of Asia with their respective creeds, cults and codes reveal to us diverse ways of responding to God whose Spirit is active in all peoples and cultures." [19]

This positive approach should create a new spirit of dialogue among the Christians. The love and concern for others that they experience should not remain within the confines of the local Church and imbibe the sectarian spirit. It is imperative that it goes beyond the denominational, religious and ethnic borders to embrace everyone in the society as sons and daughters of God. The communion with God and with one another in the Christian community liberates

15 First Plenary Assembly, "Evangelization in Modern Day Asia," in *FAPA,* Vol. I, 14.
16 Office of Evangelization, "Conclusions of the Theological Consultation," in *FAPA,* Vol. I, 344.
17 First Plenary Assembly, "Evangelization in Modern Day Asia," in *FAPA,* Vol. I, 23.
18 BIRA II, "Statement of the Assembly," in *FAPA,* Vol. I, 115.
19 BIRA IV/7, "Statement of the Assembly," in *FAPA,* Vol. I, 310.

them from every form of selfishness and invites them to build up relationship with other religious traditions and collaborate with them in evangelical witness and service of the people.[20] Moreover, it is imperative that in our efforts to construct congenial relationship with other religious people, our perception of God should no longer be narrow and exclusive due to the fact that God is the Father and Mother of all people in the world. All are the children of one and the same God. Despite the fact He is called by different names and worshipped in different symbols, He remains unchanged in His love and concern for humanity. It is worth mentioning that Pope Francis, in his dialogue with Eugenio Scalfari, a former editor of *La Republica*, made a very surprising and at the same time a very significant observation: "I believe in God, not in a Catholic God; there does not exist a Catholic God, there exists God."[21]

At this juncture, we are called to bear in mind that Jesus of Nazareth adopted an inclusive approach in his mission for the Kingdom of God. Even though he said that his mission was limited to the Jews, he talked to and praised the Samaritan woman and told her that soon people would be able to worship God in Spirit and truth beyond all system of religious symbols (Jn 4: 23-24). He praised the faith of the Roman Centurion (Mt 8:10). He was surprised and also appreciated the strong and profound faith of the Canaanite woman (Mt 15:28). The Kingdom Community that he envisaged was more open, inclusive and fluid. As observed by Felix Wilfred, "Jesus community was not a closed group. And we know that Jesus did not want to create a group with rigid structures like that of Essenes, nor were his twelve disciples viewed by him as an elitist group replacing the people of Israel."[22] Different kinds of people such as twelve apostles, seventy two disciples, poor, sick, sinners, tax collectors, women, Samarians and

20 Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue, "Our Pilgrimage of Hope," in *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents from 1992 to 1996,* Vol. II, ed., Franz-Josef Eilers, (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1997), 179, 195-96.

21 Quoted by Michael Amaladoss, "Pope Francis and Dialogue," *Vidyajyoti* 79 (2015), 165.

22 Felix Wilfred, *Sunset in the East* (Chennai: Chair of Christianity, University of Madras, 1991), 237.

a large crowd of people were his followers. That they were all in the company of Jesus reveals the character of inclusiveness and openness. Even though, "not all the followers belonged to his community in the same way" they believed in Jesus and followed him in different ways. This kind of inclusiveness and openness should become an important characteristic of the Church today. The Church, understood as communion, is called to build up communion with all people in human society and especially with people belonging to other religious traditions. Needless to say, this wider communion is an urgent call of the Holy Spirit at this time when religious rivalries and conflicts raise their ugly heads forcefully and tenaciously.

5. Dialogue: An Important Concern of the Local Church

Today dialogue has to be initiated and promoted at all levels with people belonging to various religious traditions. The Asian bishops, in the very first meeting at Manila in 1970, pledged to, "an open, sincere, and continuing dialogue with our brothers and sisters of other great religions of Asia, that we may learn from one another how to enrich ourselves spiritually and how to work more effectively together on our common task of human development."[23] Furthermore, in a context of growing conflicts, rivalries and divisions among people belonging to various religions, "the dialogue becomes urgent for harmony and peace."[24] But the crucial question that calls for our pointed attention is this: How to promote the practice of dialogue in the church?

First of all, we have to acknowledge that dialogue with other religious traditions is very demanding and challenging. Even today quite a number of Christians who have been brought up in a traditional way of perceiving Christian faith still imbibe a negative attitude towards other religious people and their ritualistic practices. They have to be constantly motivated and provided proper orientation and instruction on the positive way of looking at other religious traditions and practices, especially in the light of the recent magisterial documents. Instead of considering other religious traditions true or false, they must be seen

23 Asian Bishops' Meeting, "Resolutions of the Meeting," in *FAPA*, Vol. I, 9.

24 Workshop III, "Dialogue with Other Religious Traditions in Asia," (International Congress on Mission) in *FAPA*, Vol. I, 141.

as different ways of responding to the Mystery of Ultimate Reality. The positive approach and mutual appreciation are vitally important for positive way promoting communion with them.

It is worth mentioning at this point that what has been emerging during the past couple of decades is that the religions are slowly moving from their isolated as well as repulsive outlook to what may be called a dialogical existence with harmony and mutual acceptance. Due to the emergence of modern means of communication and intercultural exchange and changing patterns of mobility, people belonging to different religious traditions are locked up in a new situation in which they have to live together as one community, brushing aside the spirit of rivalry and animosity which they imbibed for centuries together. This is to say that there is an urgent need "to overcome the shallow religious tolerance which merely allows religions to co-exist without any creative interaction between them."[25] It is needless to say that any form of living in relationship with neighbours should be "more than a matter of mere co-existence."[26] Therefore, what is envisaged is that the religions must change "from conflict to co-existence, from acquaintance to understanding and from mere confrontation to more active cooperation."[27] Giving up the spirit of competition and aggression, cooperating with each other for building up of a new humanity marked by love, justice and fellowship should become the vocation of religions.

Secondly, any kind of ignorance and misconceptions about each other's beliefs and practices are mainly responsible for enmity or indifference perpetuated among religions for many centuries. A negative attitude inevitably invites a negative response. Hence it is vitally essential for the Christians to acquire more correct knowledge about other religious truths and traditions. Certainly it will remove a lot of prejudices and misunderstandings about our neighbours of other faiths and promote positively mutual trust and acceptance.

25 S. J. Samartha, "Commitment and Tolerance in a Pluralistic Society," 77.

26 S. J. Samartha, "Partners in Community: Some Reflections on Hindu - Christian Relations Today," *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* 4 (1980), 78.

27 S. J. Samartha, "Major Issues in the Hindu-Christian Dialogue in India Today," in *Inter-religious Dialogue* ed., Herbert Jai Singh (Bangalore: CISRS, 1967), 146.

The dialogue of experts takes place among a limited number of scholars who gather together and discuss various theological themes, the results of which are to be shared with other believers. It helps them to remove prejudice and misunderstanding, doubt and suspicion, and to gain understanding and respect for the beliefs and practices of others. The dialogue of sharing of religious experience assumes greater importance taking into account the ancient spiritual traditions, a variety of spiritual systems and a number of spiritual masters in Asia. As observed by the Asian bishops, "the sharing of religious experience challenges and transforms those who engage in it. Each grows and is changed through the encounter with committed believers of other faiths, and each bears the hope that others be equally enriched in the process of sharing."[28]

However, the dialogue, instead of remaining within a close circle of scholars and spiritual masters, must spread into wider circles involving a large number of people and communities and help to shed their fear and distrust of each other in order to build up mutual trust and confidence. This dialogical relation is to promote amicable relation with people from different religions. It begins when one encounters, lives and interacts with the others and participates in daily life activities together. It is a social interaction which shows the involvement of non-elite participants in the inter-religious dialogue at the grass roots level. The non-elite participation in the inter-religious dialogue is necessary to face the challenges of pluralistic society. This kind of process which involves the social interaction in everyday activity is known as dialogue of life. These activities can be seen in the life experience of living together with families of other religious traditions, celebrating festivities and wedding ceremony as well as doing a sharing in the day-to-day life, by the people of various faiths living together in a society. Dialogue of life commonly takes place at any place and at any time with the other religious communities.

In this dialogue of life people spontaneously and frankly share with one another their experiences of day-to-day life, with all its

28 Consultation on Christian Presence among Muslims in Asia, "Message and Recommendations of the Participants," in *FAPA,* Vol. I, 169.

challenges and struggles and see how they could respond to them with the inspiration of the challenging Spirit. By sharing of life they grow in love, harmony and mutual trust. Therefore, this form of dialogue demands that, "believers of each religion live out the highest ideals of values of their own religion and, at the same time, are ready to respect neighbours of other faiths."[29] The Asian bishops stress that the local Churches in Asia must take efforts to promote the dialogue of life in order to build up societies characterized by harmony and mutual esteem, in the face of growing religious fundamentalism and communal violence.

Another form of dialogue, which needs our pointed attention, is dialogue of political action. Nowadays, the violation of human values of life, dignity, equality, justice and social order is on the increase in India. The staggering millions of people are dehumanized and pushed to the periphery of society. Since the promotion of justice is an integral element of interreligious dialogue, the Asian bishops emphasize that "believers of all religions take up the cause of the least: the oppressed, the exploited, and the discriminated minority groups."[30] Impelled by their religious convictions, they must confront together the unjust structures of the society which perpetrate oppression and dehumanization. By working together for human liberation they can "discover the creative and redemptive forces in each religion,"[31] and "articulate the liberative and unifying potential of each religion."[32] Thus concern for the poor is the meeting point of religions, and compassion is the hallmark of a religious person. Moreover, religions have a great liberative potential that could be galvanized to liberate people from the forces of dehumanization, such as poverty, caste discrimination and communal conflicts, because these are the issues grievously affecting social solidarity and communal harmony. At this juncture, the important mission of the local Church is to build up basic

29 Consultation on Christian Presence among Muslims in Asia, "Message and Recommendations of the Participants," in *FAPA,* Vol. I, 169.

30 BIRA IV/11, "Statement of the Assembly," in *FAPA,* Vol. I, 321.

31 BIRA IV/4, "Statement of the Assembly," in *FAPA,* Vol. I, 300.

32 Office of Evangelization, "Conclusions of the Theological Consultation," in *FAPA,* Vol. I, 335.

human communities that work together for the promotion of peace and justice in the society.[33]

Conclusion

Interreligious dialogue should become one of the great concerns for Christians as well as for neighbours of other faiths in the context of religious pluralism. It is a continuous and collective search for constructing new relationships among different religious people who live together, interact with one another and share the joys and sufferings of each other. This search for relationships is aimed at building up a wider community of love and fellowship. Dialogue in the community for building up of wider community should not remain a beautiful and praiseworthy concept, but become slowly a praxis in every local church and in every human community. This search for wider communion should be seen as an essential dimension of Christian faith. The search for wider communion must move forward unmindful of hurdles and difficulties with indomitable will and courage. As Felix Wilfred pertinently observes, "Anyone who takes dialogue seriously, will understand that it is not an easy path. It is very challenging, and one important reason is that it affects us quite personally and as a community, as a religious group. But then, dialogue is today the path of promise, the way to resurrection through death to many things we have taken for granted. We have to rediscover our faith, ideals and way of life in transfigured form and dimension as a result of dialogue."[34]

It is indeed heartening to know that Professor Dr. A. Pushparajan has done extensively and intensively to set the trend of being for the Church of today, taking inspiration from Gandhi as well as his *Sat Guru*, Jesus Christ.

33 BIRA IV/12, "Statement of the Final Assembly," in *FAPA,* Vol. I, 330.
34 Felix Wilfred, *On the Banks of Ganges,* (Delhi: ISPCK 2002), 81.

INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE
Journeying towards Our Spiritual Home

J. Maria Antony

Abstract: *Human search for happiness is innate and instinctive. Quite often this single search takes varied expressions such as search for power, possessions, position, fame and name, recognition etc. Though seeking of these things are not bad in themselves, they are meaningless and useless when there is no corresponding intensity in one's life for search for the Ultimate Reality, which is the very foundation of human life. This article is centred around the question as to how the multi-religious context, in which we find ourselves, can be of help and a boon in our search for God. In order to make it happen, seekers as well as the religions need to constantly embark upon a journey which this article explains in terms of three models and three phases. In other words, a constant self-purification and an attitude of transcendence are necessary both on the part of the individuals and the religions to move towards the 'fullness of life' which Jesus came to offer. In the background of these ideas, this article specially makes mention of the contributions of Dr. Pushparajan who has done a lot for the promotion of religious harmony and inter-religious dialogue.*

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1. Introduction

The theme of journey is a powerful metaphor in all spiritual traditions, including Christianity. The Bible is filled with journeys of individuals and groups—the journey of Abraham, of the Israelites, of Elijah (1 Kg 19: 1-8), the missionary journeys of St. Paul are just a few examples. It is important to note that St. Luke presents the life of Jesus in the

format of a journey. These life-journeys are just symbolic expressions of the inner journey, those individuals and groups had undertaken. In Indian tradition, the theme of journey is well-emphasized in the famous *yatra mantra* of the Upanisad: *Asatoma sat gamaya, Thamasoma jyotir gamaya, mrityomar amrtam gamaya. Aum Shanti, Shanti, Shanti*.[1] ('Lead me from untruth to truth, from darkness to light, from death to immortality').

All these inner journeys are oriented towards only one goal: to be 'at home' with oneself, with others, with God and with the Cosmos. The longing to be 'at home' is the deepest drive in each and every human being. This longing is all the more powerful and dominant with regard to God, the Ultimate Reality. In fact, when this longing alone is met, it can be safely said that all the other longings will come to an end. Without fulfilling this longing, even if other longings are fulfilled, there would still be a vacuum in the life of a person.

This article, after briefly dealing with the fundamental predicament that could trigger the search for the Ultimate, deals with how right approach towards one's own religion and that of others is important to move towards the Ultimate Reality which alone can make our life meaningful and fruitful here on earth.

2. Human Search

Ours is an age of critical and swift upheavals spreading over almost all parts of the world. "At the height of our power and technological might, we have our deepest moments of insecurity. In spite of all our advancement in science and technology, we feel as never before the threat of the meaninglessness, the absurd."[2] The world seems to be caught up in the midst of dichotomy that is at once powerful and weak, capable of doing what is noble and what is base, disposed to freedom and slavery, progress and decline, brotherhood and hatred.[3] This

1 *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanisad*. I. 3. 28

2 S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion in a Changing World* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1967), 9.

3 *Gaudium et Spes*. No. 9, In *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*/Austin Flannery, ed. (Mumbai: St. Paul's Publications, 1995). Hereafter, *Gaudium et Spes* is referred as *GS*.

dichotomy, characteristic of the modern world, is, in fact, a symptom of the deeper dichotomy that is in human nature itself which is the meeting point of many conflicting forces. In their condition as created beings, the humans are subject to thousands of shortcomings, but feel untrammeled in their inclinations and destined for a higher form of life. Torn by a welter of anxieties, one is compelled to choose between the shortcomings and repudiate some among them. Worse still, feeble and sinful as one is, one often does the very thing one hates and does not do what one wants.[4] Thus there is basically a 'division' in human self. This results in a host of discord in social life too.

It is true that people may fail to see the dramatic nature of this state of affairs in all its clarity. The main reason for it may be that their vision is blurred by materialism or that they are prevented from even thinking about it by the wretchedness of their thought.[5] Nonetheless, in the face of modern developments, there is a growing body of persons who asks the most fundamental of all questions and strives to arrive at answers with a keen insight: What is human? What is the meaning of suffering, evil and death, which have not been eliminated by material and scientific progress? What is the purpose of these achievements, purchased at so high a price? What can human beings contribute to society? What can one expect from it? What happens after this earthly life is ended?[6] It is these existential questions that drive a person to be a seeker, to go beyond where one is and what one is.

A few among those seekers succeed in their attempt at attainment of perfection, finding the solutions to problems which concern the fundamental predicament of humankind. They also succeed in imparting their search as well as success into some of their disciples or close associates who, in turn, try to re-enact their Master's Attainment in their own personal life as well as in the immediate surroundings. This attempt of the disciples is usually done by cultivating the same sort of behaviours, habits and life-style, and by abiding by Master's teachings and instructions regarding the purpose and manner of living. They also give the greatest importance to the demands and precepts

4 Cf., Rom 7: 15ff.
5 *GS*, no. 10.
6 Ibid.

of the Teacher in regulating their personal and communitarian life. It is this threefold attempt of the disciples what formally constitutes the cult, creed and code of a particular community of those disciples around/after the particular Master. Creed consists of the beliefs of any particular religious group. Code is the *dos* and *don'ts* of a specific religious group. Cult entails the ways of worship. Community stands for the group of men and women who are bound by the set of cult, code and creed and create history and tradition of their own. The cult, creed, code and community form the basis of any religion. However it has to be understood that these four do not constitute the essence of religion. They are required by the human condition, not by the nature of God. They are the outer aspects of religion. The inner and essential core of religion is *the religious experience*.[7] The purpose of any religion is to enable its followers move towards this religious experience which would help to solve the fundamental predicaments of life.

3. The Present Scenario

But, looking at the present day situation of almost all the religions, a question arises among many: Are religions really the answers to the problems of today? Do religions of today actually give the required answer to the fundamental predicament of human beings? The present day situation seems to give a rather negative answer. The force of attraction of the traditional religions is becoming weaker and their message has little or nothing to offer to their followers. Two important factors contribute to such a negative answer: (i) Externalism, and (ii) Pluralism.

1. *Externalism*: The purpose of any religion is to contribute to the fullness of life of human beings. Living is more than existence or survival. Animals and plants exist. Human beings are supposed to live. Jesus said, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."[8] This offering of abundance of life is the sole purpose

7 Mathew Kannadipara, "Heart Spirituality: A Mystical Approach as a Means of Re-Christianization," *Indian Journal of Spirituality*, XXIV, No. 4 (October - December 2011), 380-81.

8 Jn 10: 10.

of any religion. This will be possible only when religions help people to be in touch with the interior dimension of life, namely spirituality. Devoid of this spirituality, a religion will degenerate into a mere guardian of dogmatic doctrines, legalistic practices and empty rituals. If the four essential aspects of any religion, namely creed, code, cult and community are not constantly nurtured and consistently enriched by spiritual experience, they will degenerate into fundamentalism, legalism, ritualism and rigid hierarchy respectively. This is what that has happened to most of the religions.

2. *Pluralism:* We are living in a globalized world. Gone are the days when one society was not affected by other societies, and one community was secluded from the influences of other communities. This 'one-world' situation has led to many sorts of encounters, such as encounter of cultures, encounter of various philosophies and encounter of religions. In such a situation, various religions stand side by side. It has become unavoidable for an individual to have contact with another religion. When people in the past were living in the context of one religion, the influence of other religions was virtually absent. But this is no more the case. Seeing the whole phenomenon from the Christian point of view, Felix Wilfred observes, "Neither in the Biblical times nor during the two thousand years of its history, Christianity has faced the challenge of religious pluralism in such a sharp form and in such a degree of intensity as today."[9] Today, people of various religions are drawn together more and more closely by new developments and evolutions in the world.

In such a context of multi-religious contacts, people are not hesitant to go beyond the boundaries of their own religions and try to understand and experience what other religions have to offer. For instance, it is a well-known fact that more and more Westerners are turning towards Buddhism and Hinduism for peace and solace. It is not uncommon today that Christians are practicing Buddhist meditation techniques, Hindu masses are turning towards Christian charismatic prayer

9 Felix Wilfred, *Sunset in the East? Asian Challenges and Christian Involvement* (Madras: University of Madras, 1991), 140.

centres and a majority of pilgrims are visiting the Shrines of our Lady, particularly those at Vailankanni in Tamilnadu, Mahim in Mumbai, etc. This seems to pave way for the confusion and ambiguity over one's religious identity. So much so, some people seem to perceive pluralism more as a threat leading to relativism than as a boon for enrichment. It is perhaps, on account of such a perception, and a vengeful attempt to safeguard one's identity in the wake of the close interreligious contact that the three trends of externalism, mentioned above, have taken an aggressive formulation in many religions.

4. In Search of an Answer

It is against this background a question emerges. If on the one hand religions have become dysfunctional even to the extent of being dubbed as mere fossilized structures, and if on the other hand, people are yearning for a spiritual thirst from whatever the sources that are available to them, then the question for the people of religions is whether they can infuse genuine spirituality into the principal constituents, namely creed, code, cult and community of their respective religions and at the same time not fall into the dangers of relativism. To put it differently, is it possible to accept pluralistic contacts of the followers of one religion with people of another religion and get real spiritual enrichment and yet remain faithful to one's own religious tradition without, at the same time, getting succumbed to the pitfalls of either relativism or externalism?

To this question, one may visualize three possible answers. They are presented as three models: Conflictual model, Compartmental model, and Complementary model.

4.1. Conflictual Model

In this model, the followers of a religion see all other religions, other than their own, as a threat to theirs. As a result they may manifest two types of responses. One is exclusivism and the other is fundamentalist response. The exclusivist response arises when the followers of a religion not only acknowledge the conflicts between their own religion and others as real, but also propose their own religious belief to be

true and dismiss the beliefs of others as false. They hold that their own religion is the sole depository of truth and salvation, and is the ultimate answer to the fundamental predicament of human existence. They see all the disagreeing religions as erroneous offering no salvation. This has been mostly the response of the Western Christians of the past. With regard to the fundamentalist response, some people who consider themselves to be very much rooted in their own religions, when confronted by other religions, are not able to tolerate them. So to remove or minimize the 'threat' of other religions, they begin to attack the believers of other religions. This is the strategy of, for example, the Hindu, Islamic and Christian fundamentalists.

4.2. Compartmental Model

People, who uphold this model, claim that each religion is very distinct and different, and its uniqueness is found in its background, doctrines etc. Each religion has to be valued in its own historical context and to be considered to be entire and full in itself. For example, R. C. Zaehner has made a study of the mysticism of Hinduism and Islam and eloquently explains how each of them is unique in its outlook towards God, the world and fellow human beings.[10] Though he compares and contrasts these two trends, he holds on to the position that they both are separate and distinct. The proponents of this model would consider that any attempt to enrich one religion with another is not only futile, but also dangerous.

4.3. Complementary Model

This is an approach of integration. In this approach, people appreciate the uniqueness and beauty of each religion, and yet they recognize that the different religions seek to give the ultimate answers and also each relates to that Supreme Spiritual Reality. By their friendly interactions they can seek to learn from others and arrive at a better understanding of their own tradition as well as that of the others. They also recognize the fact that all religions have imperfections and limitations for the simple reason of human instrumentality. When these imperfections

10 Cf., R. C. Zaehner, *Hindu & Muslim Mysticism* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1994), 1-20.

and limitations are recognized and accepted, it becomes an invitation for mutual enrichment and nourishment.

Obviously, neither the conflictual model nor the compartmental model can be accepted in today's context of one-world-consciousness. Whether one likes it or not, people of one religion are bound to be in contact with other religions. They have their being in mutual contact with one another so much so that one cannot distinguish the so-called secular sphere from the religious. Thus we are led to accept the third model, namely, complementary model.

5. A Co-Relation

Dr. Pushparajan arrives at the same conclusion, but from a different angle in his article "Interreligious Relations: Past, Present and Future; A Personal Case-Study Illustrative of Christian View-Point."[11] There he narrates how each religion in its relationship with other religions goes through three phases: (i) the phase of isolation, (ii) the phase of interaction, and (iii) the phase of integration. He beautifully explains the stages setting them against his own life as the background.

(i) The Phase of Isolation: Here he explains how, during his childhood days, Christians in his native village (which was exclusively Christian) had a good relationship with Hindus, living in the adjacent villages at the sociological level, but preferred to enjoy a 'splendid isolation' in so far as religious matters were concerned. He also points out that it was due to the world-view of the Church at that time.

> We were taught by the clergy that our faith was supreme and true, and that Hindus' faith was diabolic. We worshipped the true God while they were idolaters. In fact we were told by our parents that their temples were all abodes of satanic power so much so that we would not even dare go near a Hindu temple. Our form of worship was sublime but theirs was crude. The very fact that we were baptized was an assurance for us to go to heaven. However, it was not at all certain that even the best of Hindus would go to heaven by all means. If at

11 A. Pushparajan, "Interreligious Relations: Past, Present and Future; A Personal Case-Study Illustrative of Christian View-Point," *Vaiharai: A Theological Quarterly,* 3, No. 4 (October, 1998), 243-54.

> all they go, they might go because of God's special act of grace and mercy, but not because of their religious faith. Our religious practices were the best while theirs were satanic. Our morality was noble but theirs was turpitude.[12]

Needless it is to say when this attitude is maintained, sooner or later, it is unavoidable that a person ends in conflict with other religions.

(ii) The Phase of Interaction: Here a lot of compartmentalism is upheld both in one's personal life and in one's relationship with other religions. In the above article, Dr. Pushparajan explains how the compartmentalism of sacred vs. secular, piety vs. profanity, humanity vs. religiosity emerges from the dichotomous worldview of the Church itself.

> Spirituality meant for us, the Christians, to believe in the uniqueness of certain truths like the historicity of Christ's Resurrection, the Atonement theory etc., and to do certain practices prescribed by the Church viz. getting baptism in the Church, going to Church on Sundays and participating in the Eucharist. Once we had fulfilled the Church obligations, we felt we were free to do what we want, what our reason dictates according to its whims and fancies in the realms of the secular, be it political, commercial, emotional, cultural and even the erotic level. Perhaps it is this sort of dichotomy that explains the fact the so-called Christendom was responsible for the numerous wars like the crusades, the great world-wars, inquisition, etc……..It is perhaps this dichotomous approach that was one of the factors that led the Church to emphasize uniqueness to its beliefs. This in turn made Western Christianity to assume a sort of superiority to itself as compared with other religions which did not advocate the beliefs. Thus Western Christianity was keen on confronting other religions and converting their followers into its fold. The Church in the past was anxious to conquer other religions rather than collaborate with them.[13]

Dr. Pushparajan explains that this dichotomy exists at two levels. First, at the *intra-religious level* the dichotomy was between the

12 Ibid., 244.
13 Ibid., 249.

belief-system it held and the life-pattern in advocated, or between ritual practices like the Eucharist and the life-style of its people. Secondly, at the *inter-religious level* the dichotomy arose as a sequel to affirmation of uniqueness of its beliefs or practices. The Church affirmed that it alone was the true religion while all other religions were either false or partially true.[14]

(iii) The phase of Integration: It is the stage in which one sees that religions need to live in a complementary style. Dr. Pushparajan explains that he was introduced into this mindset by coming across his research guide Prof. K.J. Shah who led him to a serious reading of Gandhi. He quotes Gandhi in which Gandhi questions the 'isolating and compartmental attitude' of the Church: "Why do you think that the truth lies only in believing in Jesus as you do?... God is not encased in a safe to be approached only through a little hole in it, but that He is open to be approached through billions of opening by those who are humble and pure of heart. I invite you to step down from your pinnacle where you have left room for none but yourself."[15]

This question by Gandhi, Pushparajan claims, helped him in two ways: First of all, "I was able to establish integration between my beliefs and practices within my religion."[16] Secondly, "I was able to integrate my religion with other religions. Stressing on uniqueness of a belief or a practice only divides religions. But emphasizing a particular life of uniqueness gives me room for religions to dialogue with one another and even to collaborate among themselves."[17]

Against this background, it can be said that, for an individual to be 'at home' with the Ultimate Reality, it is important that both the individual as well as the religion s/he belongs to, constantly embark upon a journey to move from the phase of isolation and march towards the phase of integration. A person has to come out of one's phase of isolation in all walks of one's life—in one's relationship with oneself, with nature, with others and with other religions, and move towards

14 Ibid., 250.
15 Ibid., 250, 251.
16 Ibid., 252.
17 Ibid.

the second phase, and finally to the third stage. It is also applicable to all religions in their relationship with other religions. They need to constantly transcend the lower stages. If a religion fails to transcend itself constantly, then it cannot help its followers to transcend the merely mundane level of existence and move towards the supernatural.

6. Role of Inter-Religious Dialogue

The very purpose of inter-religious dialogue is mutual enrichment. Religions are helped to critically look at the way they are and move beyond the phase of isolation and reach the stage of integration through interaction. In other words, inter-religious dialogue should lead to intra-religious dialogue. So the very purpose of inter-religious dialogue is not only to recognize the ray of truth, present in other religions,[18] and try to understand each other mutually, but also to mutually challenge and enrich each other. Only in this way, religions would help each other to transcend the human-made limitations and reflect more and more the Reality they point to. If a religion tends to close itself, it will be outmoded and out-modeled. "The more a religion remains within its own ghetto, the poorer will be its self-understanding."[19]

The urgent need of the hour is, therefore, to give life to inter-religious dialogue which is gasping for breath. There is a slackening in the spirit of inter-religious dialogue due to various reasons, the most principal of which is a steady rise in religious fanaticism and fundamentalism.[20] The Magisterium of the post-conciliar Popes had not only stressed the need of dialogue but also clearly forewarned the damages of fanaticism. For instance, Pope Paul VI indicated eloquently in his apostolic exhortation *Ecclesiam Suam* that the church is essentially dialogical.[21] Further, Pope John Paul II, when speaking to various

18 Cf., *Nostra Aetate*. No. 2., in *Vatican Council II.*

19 Noel Sheth, "Christian and Buddhist Altruistic Love," *Gregorianum,* 87 (2006), 825.

20 This point, how inter-religious dialogue is gasping for breath, is well brought out in A. Pushparajan, "Dialogue: Crisis and Solution," in *Breaking New Ground in Mission*, ed. Paul Vadakumpadam et al. (Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publications, 2002), 107-33.

21 Michael H. Crosby, *The Dysfunctional Church: Addiction and Co-dependency in*

religious leaders of our country in New Delhi on November 7, 1999, said, "Religion must not become a pretext for conflict. Religion and peace go together. To wage war in the name of religion is a blatant contradiction. Religion should be a source of goodness, respect, harmony and peace. That is the only way to know God in truth and justice."[22]

Moreover in this pluralistic and multi-religious society, there is even urgency for religions to come together and totally open themselves to each other so that they might enter into mutual understanding and mutual enrichment. Moreover this dialogue has to take place primarily, not in the classrooms and conferences, but, as Abhishiktananda points out, in the "cave of our heart."[23]

7. Dr. Pushparajan's Contribution to Interreligious Dialogue

Here it is very appropriate to add that Dr. Pushparajan has been an unrelenting champion of the inter-religious dialogue. He has done a lot both academically and practically to promote harmony between religions. While he was the Head of the Department of Inter-religious Relations in Madurai Kamaraj University, he organized various Seminars, Workshops, Consultations and Conferences both at the national and international level to pave solid philosophical and theological grounds for sustaining inter-religious dialogue. In fact, he even chalked out 'Guidelines for Inter-religious Dialogue'[24] in collaboration with NCCI (National Council of Churches in India), with the active participation from an official representative of the Pontifical Council for Dialogue from Rome, Archbishop Felix Machado, and an official representative from the WCC (World Council of Churches) Dr. Hans Hucko. He has also produced some source materials for religious harmony. Noteworthy is a book consisting of the research papers on

the Family of Catholicism (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1991), 13.

22 Cited by J. T. K. Daniel, "Christian Mission amidst Religious Pluralism," in: *Mission and Religious Pluralism*, ed., Milton Jeganathan (Chennai: Department of Mission and Evangelism of Church of South India, 2003), 1.

23 Abhishiktānanda, *Saccidānanda: A Christian Approach to Advaitic Experience,* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 1974), 10.

24 A. Pushparajan & Oomman, *Issues in Hindu Christian Relations (Guidelines),* (Nagpur: NCCI, Unit II, 1996).

the theme '*The World Religions and Peace Making*'.[25] He has also organized an International Seminar mainly with a view to driving home the religions' responsibility for social equity and ecological responsibility.[26] Another inter-religious seminar that he organized was meant to upkeep the humanistic sprit in religions' search. The research papers of the seminar were brought out by Pushparajan in the form of a book on the theme '*Religions in Search of Humanism*'.[27]

While recognizing Dr. A. Pushparajan's contributions to inter-relgious mission, one cannot forget his dedicated service to the Church as well. Apart from his deep commitment to his faith, he has been rendering yeoman service to the local Church, through his Office as Secretary, the Archdiocesan commission for Dialogue in Madurai archdiocese, an office which he held for sixteen years. He was convinced that Church's new attitude of inter-religious dialogue must be propagated among the young during their formative years of schooling. Since they are already overloaded with school curricula, he invented the method of conducting cultural competitions among school children for many years, but each year with a specific aspect of the general theme of inter-religious harmony. As a guide book for such an innovative method he brought out a source book too.[28] In addition to his services to the local church in Tamilnadu, he has been serving as consulter to various commissions of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India, such as CBCI Commission of Laity, CBCI Doctrines and Commission for Faith and Doctrines, CBCI Commission for Dialogue, CBCI Commission for Family. He has also served the universal Church by being a Consultor to the Pontifical Council for Faith and Culture.

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25 Ed., A. Pushparajan, *Anaithulaha Samayangalum Amaithi Aakkamum* (Madurai: Publications Division, Madurai Kamaraj University, 1998).

26 Ed., A. Pushparajan. *Religions Towards Social Equity & Ecological Responsibility* (Madurai: Department of Interreligious Relations, Madurai Kamaraj University, 1998).

27 Ed., A. Pushparajan. *Mathangal Thedum Manitham,* Vol II. (Madurai: Dept. of Interreligious Relations, 2002).

28 A. Pushparajan, *Mathangal Thedum Manitham*. (Madurai: Dept. of Interreligious Relations and Commission for Dialogue, 1999).

Could we say that he left no stone unturned to promote dialogue between people of different religions! In this regard, he also made various attempts to popularize the teachings of Vatican II on inter-religious dialogue. The number of articles and books, he has written both in English and Tamil, point to the fact that he is a great promoter of inter-religious dialogue.

8. A Clarification

As we are talking about the need of religions journeying towards integration between religions, it should not make one surmise that it may all end up in religious syncretism. For example, the Great Emperor Akbar in 1582, taking the best of Islam, Hinduism and a few more religions promoted a new religion, Din-i Ilahi. It is an example for religious syncretism, because it did not emerge from the personal God-experience of a person and it was more for political gain. This is the precise reason why the effort of Akbar was not successful and he succeeded only in getting a handful of followers. Syncretism is an attempt to bring together the external manifestations of different religions together without any core experience. Against this, what this paper underscores is the approach of complement. It means that the religions, while preserving their own uniqueness and specificity, need to be open to one another and be ready to be challenged and purified by one another, since the expressions are only of relative value as it has been pointed out earlier.

Nor should one think that this sort of interreligious work we envision here is likely to promote the 'New Age Spirituality' which is spreading its tentacles everywhere. The problem with the followers of New Age Spirituality is that they pick and choose their spirituality from different religions without any commitment. It is a clear case of non-rootedness. Even though it is true that spiritual experience is very important as they uphold, it is also equally true that, as embodied beings, the humans have to be rooted in historical expressions of that experience. Upholding the view that spiritual experience alone, and not the expressions of that experience, is a lopsided view, which does not take into account the concrete realities of human life.

9. Conclusion

An important ingredient of journey is transcendence—to leave behind the old and embrace of old. Unfortunately many people are stuck up with what is immediate and external, and fail to transcend them. It is this failure that has led to dogmatism, legalism, ritualism and rigid hierarchy. Getting stuck up with creed leads to dogmatism; similarly when a person gets stuck up with code, cult and community, one lands up in legalism, ritualism and rigid hierarchy respectively. The externals are very often considered to be essentials and fundamentals. Instead of perceiving them as means, very many people see them as the end. Thus, many people fail to see the need to transcend them. In Christianity, many are quite content with a Jewish style of ritualism and dogmatism, with Greco-Roman rationalism and legalism. Such a false contentment has prevented them from moving towards that devouring Presence that would utterly transform them, producing in them that *metanoia* or total conversion, that is essentially implied by their faith.

EMERSON'S BRAHMA
An American Upanishad

James G. Henderson

Abstract: *Ralph Waldo Emerson's sixteen-line poem, "Brahma" (1857), makes such remarkable use of Sanskrit literature and Hindu religious ideas that its appearance constitutes a significant event in the modern history of religious ideas. This poem grew out of years of serious scholarship on Emerson's part, and it stands as his most successful attempt to integrate Indian literature and religion with American culture. The form and meter of "Brahma" reflect the Sanskrit ślōka; its content incorporates Hindu imagery and Vedanta ideas. Furthermore, Emerson's application of an Asian religious perspective to the politics and social problems of nineteenth-century America represents a significant attempt to re-mythologize the sacred by expanding its theological basis. "Brahma" is, therefore, an excellent example of the "New World Metaphysics" that Walt Whitman called for. Admirable though the structure and cultural significance of "Brahma" may be, its theme advocates violence as a just means for attaining religious ends. In the twentieth century this line of thought was challenged, both theologically and strategically, by Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave, Martin Luther King, Jr., and others who pursued nonviolent social transformation in the light of religious ideas. In the contemporary world non-violent religious perspectives have continued to be developed: for example, at the second World Parliament of Religions (1993), by a number of women peacemakers, and through the notable scholarship and leadership of Dr. A. Pushparajan.*

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Introduction

Too easily lost in the long shadows cast by larger literary landmarks of the mid-nineteenth century is “Brahma,” a lyric poem of sixteen lines, written by the leading public intellectual of nineteenth-century America, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82). One of Emerson’s personal favorites, “Brahma” has been widely anthologized and discussed by critics. Careful study of “Brahma” and its sources reveals that the poem makes such remarkable use of Sanskrit literature and Hindu religious ideas that its appearance constitutes a significant event in the history of ideas. In the way it makes appreciative and creative use of South Asian poetry and religious thought; however, it is a fatally flawed specimen of religious imagination.

Admirable though the structure of “Brahma” may be, its theme advocates violence as a just means for attaining social justice. However, this line of thought was later challenged, both theologically and strategically, by Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave, Martin Luther King, Jr., and others who pursued nonviolent social transformation in the light of religious ideas. In conclusion the paper argues that these nonviolent religious perspectives and methods of social transformation offer more adequate means for achieving justice than does Emerson's "muscular Vedanta."

1. Transcendence as Subversion: The American Renaissance and South Asian Religious Thought

Throughout the world today awareness is more widely shared than ever before inhuman history that all the earth’s people—despite our sometimes delightful sometimes fractious differences—inhabit a single, precious planet. Increasingly in our time, the vision of human unity beneath or beyond cultural and religious differences is affirmed, developed and articulated in many ways and from many different quarters. Perhaps the following words by Nolan P. Jacobson are the best description of the social dynamics of ‘our contemporary situation’:

> We live at the first time in history when little human worlds, some tracing their linguistic artifacts backward over thousands of years,

> can no longer confine themselves behind their self-defining cultural barriers. Hundreds of ethnic, religious and racial traditions are brewing together, in a roughly unified global crucible, the novel forms of awareness required for living together in ever more inclusive wholes, and leaving behind them the ancient claims of social classes, races, ethnic and national groups whose conflicts now threaten to bring the human adventure to an end.[1]

To affirm the emergence of such 'novel forms of awareness' is not to deny the presence of other forces that emphasize, sometimes legitimately in the name of pluralism, sometimes prejudicially in the name of exclusivism, what is and ought to be diachronous rather than synchronous in cultural history. Yet the stress that is laid by contemporary scholars, artists, and theologians on the common humanity of all the people of the world is an extraordinarily promising characteristic of our age. Indeed, I would argue that the various available versions of the vision of transcendent human unity may well constitute the most important resource that students and teachers of religion and of the humanities have to preserve and to interpret for our own and for future generations.

From the perspective of this global search for guiding meaning, those instances in the past when individuals of one culture endeavored to explore with appreciation (rather than either to dismiss with condescension or to appropriate with violence) the cultural and religious heritage of other groups and peoples become signal moments in the history of ideas. We need to be reminded of occasions when courageous artists and thinkers built bridges of unity across great gulfs of historical isolation, cultural estrangement, and religious intolerance.

The 1850s on the verge of the American Civil War were indeed the *annimirabili* constituting what F. O. Mathiessen termed the "American renaissance."[2] Seasoned scholars of American literary culture, such as

1 Kenneth K. Inada and Nolan P. Jacobson, eds., *Buddhism and American Thinkers* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1984), 38-39.

2 F.O. Mathiessen, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (Oxford University Press 1941).

Lawrence Buell, notice that the great novels[3] that appeared during these years have in common a tendency to uphold a "center of values that is non-white, non-Christian, or feminist."[4] Chief Seattle's address to the Governor of Washington in 1854 embodies such a center of values in particularly poignant terms.

In terms of American poetry also, the 1850s was a turning point for what David S. Reynolds calls "the subversive imagination."[5] One of the characteristics that made pre-Civil War literature subversive was many of its best writers' interest in Muslim and Hindu literature and philosophy.[6] The central figure of this era, Ralph Waldo Emerson, who left his Unitarian pulpit for the public lecture platform in 1832, is best understood as 'a prophet,' as the writer "who most fully understood the philosophical significance of Asian thought," and as the first American thinker to proclaim what he called "the American Newness,"[7] "a fusion of East and West."[8] Henry Thoreau (who called himself 'a modern Hindoo' in an early draft of *Walden*), went even farther in his Asian researches than Emerson did, but that is another story.

It would be interesting to compare the American Renaissance of the 1850s with the Bengal Renaissance of the mid-nineteenth century.

3 For instance, *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne (1850), *Moby-Dick* by Herman Melville (1851), *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe (1852), and *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau(1854).

4 For a more specific example, Buell reads Uncle Tom's Cabin as calling for "something closer to revolution than to restoration, insofar as it finds the true sources of spiritual renewal and authority on society's margins—in women, children, and blacks—and insofar as the religion of the heart that such people exemplify for Stowe represents a challenge to the patriarchal theological establishment." [New England Literary Culture (1986),188.]

5 David S. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (Harvard University Press, 1988).

6 See David Reynolds' discussion of "Orientalism" in Chapters l and 2 of *Faith and Fiction: The Emergence of Religious Literature in America* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981).

7 Irving Howe, *The American Newness: Culture and Politics in the Age of Emerson* (1986).

8 Carl T. Jackson, *The Oriental Religions and American Thought: Nineteenth-Century Explorations* (Contributions in American Studies, Number 55, Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 57.

Debendranath Tagore, in particular, is a figure who has much in common philosophically with Emerson, amplifying the latter's concept of Brahma as a unifying and orienting source of creative power.[9] According to Wilhelm Halbfass, Tagore advocated an "intuitive," experiential approach to religious knowledge (as did the American Transcendentalists), a method based on the assumption that "The source of truth, that site of divine inspiration, may be found in one's own heart."[10] Tagore's *magnum opus*, the *Brahmadharmagrantha* (1850-52), was written to provide intellectual grounding for the Brahmo Samaj movement. Begun as the *Atimya Sabha* (or 'Society of Friends') in 1815-16 by Ram Mohan Roy, the Brahmo Samaj was an effort to reform and reassert Indian culture in response to contact with the West.

Debendranath Tagore, the father of author Rabindranath Tagore, who took over leadership of the Brahmo Samaj after the death of Ram Mohan Roy in Bristol, England, in 1833, helped to nurture in and around Calcutta University a new generation of writers and intellectuals, just as Emerson Thoreau and Margaret Fuller had done in America in grooming 'second-generation' Transcendentalist-Unitarians such as James Freeman Clarke and Samuel Johnson).[11] They included Bhudeb Mukherji (1827-94), Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-94), and Keshub Chunder Sen (1843-84). Like their American counterparts, these young Bengalis developed world views that were shaped by religious ideas rooted in both the East and the West. Thus, India had its own 'newness' to proclaim in the middle of the nineteenth century, a Renaissance that resembles the literary flowering of American culture in its radical assertion of values, traditions, and habits of mind that

9 Little of the elder Tagore's work, including the *Brahmadharmagrantha* (1850-52), has been translated from Bengali into English. Perhaps the most accessible source of information in English about Tagore is de Bary et al, *Sources of Indian Tradition* (1958), 602-15.

10 Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988). This book originally appeared in German as *Indien und Europa: Perspektiven ihrer geistigen Begegnung* (Basel: Schwabe, 1981), 224.

11 For more on these figures see Carl T. Jackson, *The Oriental Religions and American Thought* (1981) and Arthur Versluis, *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions* (1993).

the West had marginalized. What is more, these two 'renaissances' become historically connected as Ram Mohan Roy influenced both Emerson and Tagore, just as in the twentieth century Thoreau would have an impact on Gandhi, and Gandhi on Martin Luther King, Jr.

With specific reference to American literary history, a number of excellent studies emphasize the importance of Hindu and Buddhist thought for the American Transcendentalists and their intellectual descendants. There is little doubt that Asian religions have had a very significant impact on major American literary voices (including Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and Gary Snyder) as well as on fascinating but less celebrated writers such as Adelaide Crapsey, John Gould Fletcher, Lafcadio Hearn, and even Henry Adams.[12]

The Transcendentalists were the first Americans to look seriously to the East, but how well did they understand the South and East Asian philosophy they claimed to admire? Let us attempt to answer these questions with regard to Emerson. First it must be conceded that, measured by the standards of contemporary scholarship, Emerson's knowledge of India was extremely limited. He knew no South or East Asian languages, for America lagged far behind Europe in the growth of philological interest in Asia. Even more noteworthy is Emerson's faulty understanding of Buddhism as a religion of 'annihilation,' 'threatening with death and night…[e]very thought, every enterprise, every sentiment.' In time he acknowledged at least some of his shortcomings. In his correspondence with Max Müller, for example, Emerson humbly confesses the limits of his own scholarship.[13] While admitting that Emerson knew less about India than we do today, I do think his knowledge of the Vedic mind and his appreciation of Sanskrit poetry was both more than superficial. Furthermore, Emerson's interest in the spiritual resources of Asia was far from casual, as he seriously used the *Bhagavad Gita* and the Upanishads to understand the central social, political, and religious issue of his lifetime: the

12 See also James G. Henderson, "*'Go East, Young Man...': Patterns of Orientation in American Poetry*" (1983).

13 *The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Ralph Rusk (New York: Columbia U P, 1939), 245-47.

War Between the States. Writing in 1871 on 'The Intermingling of Religions' for the *Atlantic Monthly*, Lydia Maria Child remarked that "there are gems hidden among all sorts of rubbish."[14] One such 'gem' too often overlooked or misunderstood, is Emerson's 'Brahma.'

2. Brahma's South Asian Structure, Sources and Metaphysics

Careful study of "Brahma," a lyric of sixteen lines written by Emerson in 1856 and first published in 1857 and its sources reveals that Emerson applied his self-schooled and largely intuitive grasp of Indian literature and religion very skillfully indeed in a distinctly American context. Thus, the composition and publication of "Brahma," I want to argue, are very significant events in intellectual and religious history, if that history is to be written, read, and taught in terms of the contributions of non-western cultures to modern American or to contemporary world civilization.

BRAHMA[15]

If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near;
Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanished gods to me appear;
And one to me are shame and fame.

14 Paul A Carter, *The Spiritual Crisis of the Gilded Age* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois U P, 1971), 205.

15 "Brahma" has been widely anthologized. After its debut in the *Atlantic Monthly* (1857), Emerson included it in *May-day and Other Pieces* (1867), though he had to resist the recommendation of his publisher, J. T. Fields, that it be omitted. The standard edition of Emerson's published writings is *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1971-2013). "Brahma" is found herein: Volume IX, 365. References to this standard edition of ten volumes are hereinafter abbreviated as *CWE*.

They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn and Brahmin sings.

The strong gods pine for my abode,
And pine in vain the sacred Seven;
But thou, meek lover of the good!
Find me, and turn thy back on heaven.

2.1. Brahma's Devotees and Cultured Despisers

"Brahma" first came to public attention thanks to the so-called "Boston Brahmin,"[16] James Russell Lowell, who included it in the inaugural number of the journal he founded, *The Atlantic Monthly*. The poem was one of four which Emerson contributed to the christening of the *Atlantic*, a magazine with which he was to be associated for the rest of his life. Upon its publication, "Brahma" struck many of its first readers as an absurdly obscure and probably heathen poem.[17]However, "Brahma" has proved to be perhaps the most discussed of all Emerson's poems. Though a survey of the fascinating body of critical literature that "Brahma" has engendered must lie beyond the scope of this paper,[18] it ought nevertheless to be said that while "Brahma" has always attracted its cultured despisers (from Dr. Holmes to John

16 The "Boston Brahmins" were so called not because of their knowledge of India but because of their standing at the apex of Boston society. See Egbert S. Oliver, "The Brahmins Did Not Know India" (1959). Rick Fields points out that the fortunes of many of Boston's leading families (including the Peabody, Sturgis, and Russell families) were made in the East India trade (*How the Swans Came to the Lake* [1992], 54).

17 Not every reader found "Brahma" abstruse or threatening, however. "According to a story current in Emerson's lifetime, a little girl was asked by her teacher to memorize and recite one of Mr. Emerson's poems. She chose 'Brahma,' and when the surprised teacher asked why, the child replied: 'Because it's the easiest to understand. It simply means that God is everywhere.'" (Brooks, Lewis and Warren, I756).

18 A survey of this sort may be found in Henderson's unpublished dissertation, "A Heathenish Integrity" (Duke University, 1979), 45-52.

Updike[19]), many of Emerson's wisest readers regard it as one of his most satisfying literary efforts. In fact, "Brahma" drew a pretty heavy volley of fire from a number of sporting literary men who sighted it as an inviting target for satire.[20] Not every contemporary critic panned the poem, however. Robert Frost, Mark Van Doren, and Quentin Anderson all have registered high praise for "Brahma."[21] In the 1930s Arthur Christy read the poem as "a crystallization of Emerson's Oriental interests,"[22] while Frederic Ives Carpenter wrote, "No more perfect example [than "Brahma"] exists of that 'Meeting of East and West' which is perhaps the most significant phenomenon of modem history."[23] That "Brahma" has also been thoroughly commented upon by philosophers and critics in India is a fact that supports Carpenter's claim. Indeed, the best informed reading[24] I have seen to date of "Brahma" concludes that it is a work of rare poetic genius:

> The poem Brahma is a perfect artistic whole, and an admirable example of thorough assimilation. If there is a poem in the English language which not only breathes the spirit of the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita but reproduces the cadence, the rhythm and terseness of the Sanskrit of these scriptures, it is Emerson's Brahma.[25]

Before discussing the religious ideas that "Brahma" expresses, and the way Emerson applied those ideas to the major social conflict of his

19 Richard Poirier writes in his introduction to the Oxford Authors anthology of Emerson's writings that Updike finds "something fatally faded about the works [Emerson] has left us." Presumably "Brahma" is not exempt from this judgment. See *Poirier's Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1990), ix.

20 Oliver Wendell Holmes, *Ralph Waldo Emerson (*Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1885), 397.

21 See Van Doren, ed*., Introduction to Poetry, Second Edition* (1962), 90-93, and Anderson, *The Imperial Self: An Essay in American Literary and Cultural History* (1971), 37.

22 Arthur Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism* (New York: Columbia U P, 1932), 164.

23 Frederic Ives Carpenter*, Emerson and Asia* (Cambridge MA: Harvard U P, 1930), 87.

24 K. R. Chandrasekharan's "Emerson's Brahma: An Indian Interpretation" (*New England Quarterly 33* (December 1960), 506-512. This excellent essay is also available online (accessed 20 June 2016): http://raichev.net/files/Chan1960.pdf

25 Chandrasekharan, 512.

time, let us first examine how Emerson constructed this poem upon knowledge he had acquired from careful reading of the first European translations and discussions of Sanskrit literature.

2.2. "Brahma" and the Śloka Form

Whitman in the nineteenth century and Chandrasekharan in the twentieth both noted the 'melody' or 'cadence' of "Brahma." Studying the poem's metrical structure offers perhaps the best vantage point from which to appreciate its aesthetic merits. Though metrical conventions have largely passed from fashion in discussing contemporary poetry, this was not the case, of course, either in Emerson's era or during the Vedic period. Indeed, it should not surprise us that Emerson, for whom poetry was "meter-making argument,"[26] would devote special care to how it sounded. "Every good poem that I know," Emerson said in "Poetry and Imagination" (1872), "I recall by its rhythm also."[27]

"Brahma" is composed of four quatrain stanzas of iambic tetrameter. Just as the god, Brahma, is depicted as having four heads, the poem, "Brahma," has a four-part anatomy. Its dimensions, so to speak, are four by four by four. Four stanzas of four lines each, and each line consisting of four iambic feet: "Brahma" is a highly regular poem. Or is it? Metrically, at least, one notices something irregular, or at least subtly complex, at work in the poem. The force of the lines, which the twentieth-century poet and critic, Mark Van Doren, likened to "the neat power of an engine whose wheels turn almost noiselessly, one within or behind the other,"[28] is created by the continuous interplay of two ways of taking the pulse of the poem. Rather like 6/8 time in Western music, "Brahma" has a compound meter. The combination of its 'duple' iambic feeling with a 'triple' feeling consisting of two rhythmic groups per line (each initiated by a three-syllable dactyl) creates the power that drives the poem forward.

26 From Emerson's essay, "The Poet," in *Essays: First Series* (1844), *CWE*, III, 9.

27 *CWE*, VIII, 14. This essay was published in *Letters and Social Aims* (1875). A concise compilation of Emerson's scattered remarks about poetry is Charles H. Foster, *Emerson's Theory of Poetry* (New York: Midland House, 1939).

28 Mark Van Doren, *Introduction to Poetry* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1962), 91.

Take, for example, the third line of the first stanza ("They know not well the subtle ways"). Felt as iambic tetrameter, the stresses of the line are clipped and decisive:

They KNOW not WELL the SUB-tle WAYS

This is the most obvious way to scan the line, but not the only way. Look at it now in terms of a longer rhythmic pulse. Divide the line in half, briefly pause by putting a gentle caesura in the middle of the line, and read it as two identical metrical groups, each consisting of a dactyl followed by a single, accented syllable:

THEY know not WELL THE sub-tle WAYS

The triple feeling of the dactyls in this second reading imparts a fluidity to the line that offsets the choppiness of the iambs we first hear. This compound metrical pattern repeats throughout the poem, though some lines emphasize one meter over the other. Line two, for example, sounds better with dactyls; whereas, line four, set off by commas, scans more naturally as four iambs. Also, the opening line of the poem is unique in that it resists both patterns of stress to some degree, raising at the outset the question of the poem's meter.

Such a metrical analysis suggests that one of the chief points of artistic merit in "Brahma" is the manner in which 'the subtle ways' of which the poet speaks—the ways, in Vedanta terms, that *māya* is transcended by the unifying power of Brahman—are skillfully exemplified in the compound metrical structure of the poem itself. What's more, the poem's rhythm both participates in and represents (in a concrete and quite specific way) Emerson's desire to plant Indian ideas in American soil, for "Brahma" is composed in a form and meter virtually identical to the *śloka* in which much of classical Sanskrit literature is cast.

The *śloka* (or *anuṣṭubh* stanza) is a unit of thirty-two syllables, divided into four groups of eight—the same form that Emerson chose for "Brahma." Rhythmically, the chief difference between classical Indian and classical European stanzas is that Western poets employed patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables, whereas Sanskrit poets developed a more flexible form of metrics, the syllable line. In this

latter system each line consists of a certain number of syllables, arranged without regard to stress. This more flexible structure creates an impression of calculated irregularity—of fluid, constant, and subtle metrical change—that possesses metaphysical and linguistic implications as well as broad poetic possibilities. The compound meter of "Brahma" closely approximates the rhythmic fluidity of the *śloka*, which one linguist calls "the bread-and-butter meter of Sanskrit verse."[29]

To give a better idea of the metrical similarity between the English of "Brahma" and the Sanskrit of the *śloka* form, consider this transliteration by Joseph N. Rawson of *śloka* 2:19 of the *Katha Upanishad*, which (as we are about to see) was one of several texts Emerson consulted as he created "Brahma":

Hantā cen manyate hantum,
hataś cen manyate hatam
Ubhau tau na vijānīto;
nāyam hanti na hanyate

If the slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
Both of them do not understand;
This slays not, neither is it slain.[30]

With this metrical parallel to "Brahma" in mind, we now turn from form to content and briefly review the Indian sources of Emerson's poetic and religious knowledge as they are creatively consolidated and expressed in "Brahma."

29 Michael A. Coulson, *Sanskrit: An Introduction to the Classical Language* (1976), rev. by Richard Gombrich and James Benson as *Teach Yourself Sanskrit* (Seven Oaks, Kent: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992), 250. Another helpful English source on the *ślōka* form is the last section of Ann Stanford's introduction to her verse translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* (New York: Seabury, 1970).

30 Joseph N. Rawson, trans., *Katha Upanishad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934), 1.2.19.

2.3. Hindu Sources of "Brahma"

Emerson's knowledge of Indian philosophy, literature, and religion was entirely text-based. Like Max Müller, he never visited India. Apparently Emerson never even met a person of Indian descent until the year after "Brahma" was published, when Swami Jogut Sangooly took tea with him in Concord.[31] It is beyond the scope of the present essay to survey all the sources that Emerson consulted to acquaint himself, over decades of study, with South Asian literature and religion.[32] However, let it suffice to say that Emerson's knowledge was substantial, for a person of his place and time.

Investigation of the contents of Emerson's library, and of his borrowings from libraries at Harvard and elsewhere in Massachusetts, indicate several likely sources for his knowledge of classical Indian poetics. Among the texts he consulted earlier in his life were William Ward's *A View of the History, Literature, and Mythology of the Hindus* (1806). The second edition of this work (1822) contains an essay entitled "The Measure of *Sungskritu* Verse."[33] Emerson was also familiar with surveys in French by Victor Cousin and Joseph Marie Degérando as well as with the English writings and translations of William Jones and H. T. Colebrooke. Emerson's aunt, Mary Moody Emerson, had introduced him to the life and work of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who coined the term "Hinduism" and provided the first English translations of the Upanishads. Emerson especially loved Charles Wilkins' landmark translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* (1785), a copy of which he was delighted to purchase (for £1) through a London bookseller in 1845. Moreover, during the same year in which Emerson wrote "Brahma," he had in hand William Rounseville Alger's brief discussion of the *śloka* form, as presented in the introduction to that fellow Unitarian clergyman's anthology, *The Poetry of the East* (1856).[34]

31 Rusk, *Life of Emerson*, 397.

32 For a discussion of this sort, see J. G. Henderson, '*A Heathenish Integrity*,' 57-73.

33 William Ward, *A View of the History: Literature and Mythology of the Hindoos* (London: Kingsbury, Parbury, Allen, and Co., 1822), vol., 2, 379-381.

34 William Rounseville Alger, *The Poetry of the East* (Boston: Whittemore, Niles and Hall, 1856).

From these and several other, carefully selected and closely read texts Emerson quarried the meter, imagery and ideas that baffled most American readers of "Brahma." Emerson regarded the *Bhagavad Gita* as the central text of Indian thought. It should not be surprising, therefore, to discover that "Brahma" resembles the *Gita* in several ways: in terms of setting (on the brink of a great civil war), theme (how to come to grips with impending and abhorrent violence), and point of view (the omniscient, first-person voice of divine authority).

In the same year that Emerson purchased his translation of the *Gita*, he also studied H. H. Wilson's translation of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. Indeed, he copied into his notebook "Y" the following passage, among pages of others:

What living creature slays or is slain?
What living creature preserves or is
preserved? Each is his own destroyer
or preserver, as he follows evil or good.[35]

At the time, Emerson re-cast these lines in an original quatrain that languished in his Journals for ten years, until further reading (in the Upanishads) prompted him to transform it into the opening stanza of "Brahma":

What creature slayeth or is slain?
What creature saves or saved is?
His life will either lose or gain,
As he shall follow harm or bliss.[36]

K. R. Chandrasekharan asserts that the *Gita* exerted the greatest force on the way Emerson shaped his "Brahma"; however, he does consider the *Katha Upanishad* a more likely source for several of the poem's main ideas. Indeed, Emerson's journals actually embody this theory because the manuscript draft of "Brahma" appears in the midst

35 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of RWE* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960-82), IX, 319. References to this standard edition of 16 volumes are hereinafter abbreviated as *JMN*.

36 *JMN*, IX, 354.

of passages Emerson transcribed from E. Röer's translation of the *Katha*. The burden of what that Upanishad reveals is that "Brahma the supreme" is the true end of all human desires, and is a reality that transcends both life and death. Emerson was aware of the Vedanta formula, *Atman is Brahman*, and he changed his mind about which side of the metaphysical equation he wished to emphasize in his poem. As "Brahma" was originally drafted in his Journal, its title was "Song of the Soul."[37]

In 1861 Emerson revisited the wisdom that "Yama, the lord of Death" shares with Naciketas in the *Katha Upanishad*. By this time the American Civil War (1861-65) had begun in earnest, and Emerson pondered the casualties. His original hope—that the South's slaves might be purchased, and freed, by the North—had not gained traction. So Emerson cast his lot with those who followed what they called the "glory road" to war, and he justified this ethical decision with Vedanta metaphysics. Emerson concluded his lecture, "Immortality" (1861), with his own version of Yama's teaching, and in the process he restates the theme of "Brahma":

> The soul is not born; it does not die; it was not produced from it. Unborn, eternal, it is not slain, though the body is slain; subtler than what is subtle, greater than what is great, sitting it goes far, sleeping it goes everywhere.[38]

Death, Emerson concludes, is not the final frontier. Brahma will absorb 'the Soul,' just as the title of his 1857 poem did.

2.4. Emerson's "New World Metaphysics"

What Wilhelm Halbfass said of the European Age of Enlightenment is also true of the American Renaissance that Emerson announced with his essay, "The American Scholar" (1837): namely, that the spirit of the age "was characterized by a very distinct association between a general interest in non-European traditions and the motif of criticizing

37 *JMN*, XIV, 102.

38 *CWE*, VIII, 193-94. This lecture later became the last chapter of Emerson's final book, *Letters and Social Aims* (1875).

contemporary Christianity and Europe."[39] The same point was made with even more specificity by Ursula King:

> The interest of Western individuals in Hinduism during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was motivated by a disillusionment with Christianity but also by a general discontent with Western life, with the growth of industrialization and of new political forces.[40]

As Walt Whitman rightly suggested (and the Boston "Brahmins" feared), Emerson's "Brahma" is a poet-scholar's attempt to use Hindu terminology to re-interpret American experience. Emerson's use of Indian ideas to solve American intellectual problems is an important aspect of the "New World Metaphysics" that Whitman called for in *Democratic Vistas* (1871).[41] "Brahma" is a significant text not only because it expresses Vedanta themes in a carefully crafted poetic form. Even more noteworthy is the way it boldly re-mythologizes American notions of the sacred.

In "Brahma" Emerson was trying to do for America what in *Representative Men* (1854) he argued that Plato had done for Europe: i.e., to travel "east, to import the other element, which Europe wanted, into the European mind."[42] While European-American pioneers pushed westward, settling North America, Emerson used textual study to head eastward, all the way to India. "Brahma," for this American scholar, fulfilled a lifelong quest for words adequate to express the ultimate nature of reality and to harness that vision to an ethical outlook.

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39 Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding* (Albany, NY: The State University of New York Press, 1988), 69. This book originally appeared in German as *Indien und Europa: Perspektieven ihrer geistigen Begegnung* (Basel: Schwabe, 1981).

40 Ursula King, "Sociological Approaches to the Study of Modern Hinduism," *Social Action* 32 (October-December 1982), 444.

41 Whitman's call for "a new Literature, perhaps a new Metaphysics, certainly a new Poetry…[as] the only sure and worthy supports and expressions of the American Democracy" is ably discussed and amplified in Giles Gunn, ed., *New World Metaphysics: Readings on the Religious Meaning of the American Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

42 *CWE,* IV, 25.

The same year he wrote "Brahma," Emerson also concluded the "Literature" chapter of *English Traits* (1856). Here again Emerson indicated his high regard for the South Asian religious imagination. In "the grand style of thinking in the Indian writings," Emerson wrote, is intelligence that "astonishes and disconcerts English decorum. For once there is thunder it never heard, light it never saw, and power which trifles with time and space."[43] "The true artist has the planet for his pedestal," Emerson believed.[44] "Brahma" is the creation of an American who, in the words of Raymond Schwab, "embraced [India] as a reservoir of facts that were not outworn but perpetual, of forces that held out a possible future for each sect and school in the West."[45] Emerson focused the Hindu 'forces' he embraced not only upon literature, philosophy and religion, but also upon politics.

It is tempting to read "Brahma" as a liberal American's comment on the violent events of the Indian Rebellion of 1857. Wouldn't it to be satisfying to set Emerson in contrast to the brutal and racist Whittier of "The Pipes of Lucknow" (1858)? In this poem, as Robert Penn Warren reads it, "the gentle Quaker poet [Whittier] breaks blamelessly out in warlike glee,"[46] as he relishes the way "the tartan clove the turban." How engaging it is to imagine Emerson, in contradistinction to his friend Whittier's support for the Raj, sympathetically reading Karl Marx's account of the revolutionary uprising in India as it appeared in Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune*! It is not impossible that Emerson did just such reading; however, his Journals make clear that "Brahma" was drafted in the summer of 1856, before the Mutiny began. Though Emerson's Journals rule out one source of political inspiration for "Brahma," they quite clearly point to a different political event: Captain John Brown's massacre of pro-slavery men at Pottawatomie Creek, Kansas, in May 1856, in retaliation for the burning of the anti-slavery settlement of Lawrence, Kansas.

43 *CWE,* V, 145.

44 *CWE*, IV, 5.

45 Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680-1880*, trans., Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 248. This book originally appeared in French as *La Renaissance orientale* (Paris: Editions Payot, 1950).

46 Robert Penn Warren, *John Greenleaf Whittier's Poetry: An Appraisal and a Selection* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 41.

John Brown (1800-59) was a powerful orator, and he spoke twice in Concord in the 1850s; both times he was received at the home of Waldo and Lydian Emerson.[47] Emerson came to admire Brown and generously contributed to his cause of ending slavery through force of arms. Brown's message, which he delivered across the North with tremendous conviction and rhetorical force, was at once political and theological: "Without the shedding of blood," Brown argued, "there can be no remission of sins."[48] For Captain Brown, and his sons and other followers, the demon of slavery could only be exorcised by violent means. When news reached Massachusetts of the armed confrontation Brown had led at Pottawatomie Creek, Emerson told a fund-raising gathering in Cambridge, "All the right is on our side."[49] Shortly thereafter, as his Journals make clear—sometime between 23 July and 8 August 1856—Emerson wrote "Brahma."

In writing "Brahma" Emerson was looking for grounding, guidance, and justification as he applied his moral and religious imagination to what he called his "quarrel with America."[50] Whereas Brown defined and defended his antislavery position in Christian terms, Emerson adopted a Hindu stance. He identified with Arjuna on the eve of his own armed conflict: a reluctant warrior seeking to move, as one translator of the *Gita* has put it, "from perplexity to understanding and correct action."[51] "Brahma" indicates how Emerson's Hindu sources had persuaded him that "slayer" and "slain" are ultimately one, their lives transcended and united by Brahman. On the basis of this metaphysical insight, Emerson drew the ethical conclusion that a just war was not only possible but, with respect to ending the abomination of slavery, absolutely necessary.

47 John McAleer, *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Days of Encounter* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1984), 520, 532.

48 For an excellent discussion of Brown's theology, see Stephen B. Oates, *To Purge This Land with Blood: A Biography of John Brown* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982), 61 *et passim*.

49 Rusk, *Life of Emerson*, 390.

50 *JMN,* XI, 284.

51 W. J. Johnson, trans., *The Bhagavad Gita* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), vii.

"Brahma" has certain very concrete meanings if read in the context of Emerson's own life and times. For example, the manuscript draft of the poem in Journal SO shows that Emerson added the adjective 'red' to modify the noun 'slayer' in the first line of the poem.[52] The modifier does more than specify *Rūdra,* one of the names of Shiva. 'Red' was exactly what Emerson saw when he heard that his Massachusetts Senator, Charles Sumner, had been brutally beaten for his antislavery views by South Carolina Representative Preston Brooks as Sumner sat at his desk on the floor of the Senate. That beating took place on May 22, 1856. Four days later Emerson addressed a meeting held in Concord to protest the assault on Sumner and to redouble abolitionist efforts in "bleeding Kansas."[53] Five years later, as Union troops marched south singing "John Brown's body lies a-moldering in the grave," Emerson marched with them in spirit, though he stepped to the music of a different, South Asian, drummer.

In the same year that "Brahma" was published, T. C. Sandars coined the phrase, "muscular Christianity."[54] Susan L. Roberson has pointed out that in his Unitarian sermons of 1826-32, Emerson repeatedly calls for "the formation of a muscular, American Christian, a being of manliness, sanctity and power"[55] who would embody eternal virtues by courageously confronting the challenges of the present age. When he wrote "Brahma" decades later, Emerson was sounding a similar theme, but he played it in an Indian mode. "Muscular Vedanta" is one way to characterize the militantly radical vision that Emerson expressed in "Brahma" on the eve of the American Civil War.

3. Beyond "Brahma"

The burden of this essay has thus far been to establish that Emerson's "Brahma" is a cultural artifact of remarkable historical significance,

52 *JMN,* XIV, 102-103.

53 Gay Wilson Allen, *Waldo Emerson: A Biography* (New York: Viking Press, 1981), 585.

54 Donald E. Hall, ed., *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 7.

55 Susan L. Roberson, "'Degenerate Effeminacy' and the Making of a Masculine Spirituality in the Sermons of Ralph Waldo Emerson," in Hall, ed., *Muscular Christianity*, 162.

intellectual richness, and aesthetic merit. At the same time, the poem may also be viewed as a flawed specimen of religious imagination. Much more damning than the valid criticism that "Brahma" sprang from a dated and provincial understanding of South Asian religion and poetics is the charge that in "Brahma" Emerson employs religious imagination for a pernicious purpose: to sanctify war through an appeal to metaphysics.

Throughout human history religious people have sought to sustain, preserve, liberate and transform human life. In the process religious people, not infrequently, have also been responsible for causing or legitimizing tremendous human suffering. John Brown was one who misused religion in this latter way. To my mind Brown was no saint, though many of his contemporaries, including Emerson and Thoreau, took him to be one.[56] The truth about what Brown and his sons did with their cutlasses under the cover of the Kansas night has been revealed by history in a much harsher light than Brown ever cast on his own actions. Just as he deceived most of his supporters about his secret plans for raiding the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry to launch a slave rebellion throughout the American South, Brown also kept deceptively quiet about the way his pro-slavery victims were butchered in Pottawatomie Creek after being dragged from their beds.

Though not a combatant himself, Emerson's zealous support of John Brown, and of the 'righteous war' against slavery, never flagged. As America's greatest civil strife limped to its bloody conclusion, Emerson wanted to show the South no mercy. "Tis far the best that the rebels have been pounded instead of negociated [sic] into a peace," Emerson wrote in 1865. "They must remember it & their inveterate brag will be humbled."[57] Three years later Ellen Emerson noted her father's youthful enthusiasm as the two of them clambered outside a Brooklyn church to glimpse the Union's greatest hero, General Grant.[58] Retribution, not reconciliation, was uppermost in Emerson's mind at the conclusion of the Civil War.

56 After Brown was hanged for treason on December 2, 1859, Emerson gave public eulogies in both Concord and Salem. Robert D. Richardson, Jr., *Emerson: The Mind on Fire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 545.

57 *JMN,* XV, 459.

58 Rusk, *Life of Emerson*, 437.

Also an articulate exponent of the "spirit of '76," Emerson's reputation first soared when he commemorated "the shot heard round the world" during Concord's celebration of its role in the Revolutionary War (1775-83). "Brahma" and the "Concord Hymn" (1836) not only are identical in length and meter; both reveal the martial spirit that deeply imbued this American scholar. If Harold Bloom is right, and Emerson's mind is 'the mind of America'—if Emerson's fertile and wide-ranging religious imagination did in fact shape a new and distinctive form of spirituality in America[59] —then readers best be warned of this prophet's tendency to valorize violence. David Porter's excellent study of Emerson's poetry sounds just such a warning in making the point that "Emerson's prose repeatedly links poets and soldiers."[60] An example from Emerson's Journals is almost humorous today: "We must fire…the artillery of sympathy and emotion" against "the mechanical powers and mechanical philosophy of this time."[61] The martial quality of Emerson's imagination explains a good deal about how and why the *Gita* spoke to him. In the twentieth century the *Gita* similarly appealed to Robert Oppenheimer as he witnessed the detonation of his first atomic bomb[62]—just as it did to the Nazi Indologist, J. W. Hauser, who in 1934 wrote an interpretation of the *Gita* entitled "An Indo-Aryan Metaphysic of Battle and Action" (*Eine indo-arische Metaphysik des Kampfes und der Tat*).[63]

In the context of the Indian national movement as well, the *Gita* was read as a call to arms. Bal Gangadhar Tilak is recorded to have said that "Krishna's teaching in the *Bhagavad Gita* is to kill even our teachers and our kinsmen. No blame attaches to any person if he is

59 Harold Bloom, "Emerson: The American Religion," in *Ralph Waldo Emerson*, rev. ed. [Bloom's Modern Critical Views], ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 2007), 33-61. This essay originally appeared in Bloom's *Agon: Towards a Theory of Revisionism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

60 David Porter, "The Muse Has a Deeper Secret: Emerson's Poetry," in *American Poetry to 1914* [The Critical Cosmos Series], ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1987), 165.

61 *JMN*, VII, 271.

62 Huston Smith, *The World's Religions: Our Great Wisdom Traditions* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), 12-13.

63 Eric J. Sharpe, *The Universal Gita: Western Images of the* Bhagavad Gita (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1985), 128-31.

doing deeds without being motivated by a desire to reap the fruit of his deeds."[64] Writing with keen awareness of the relationship between religion and violence, Arvind Sharma commented, "the projection of the *Bhagavadgita* as the central scripture of modern Hinduism" is a rather curious fact that owes more than a little to the colonial and post-colonial contexts into which the Vedic spirit has been reborn in our time.[65] Mercifully, what war means in the *Gita* can be understood quite differently from how Emerson or Tilak interpreted it.

For such an alternative interpretation consider Mahatma Gandhi, who first read the *Gita* in England in 1889, in Edwin Arnold's translation. Gandhi believed that in the context of the *Mahabharata*, the Kurukṣetra War appears as an exercise in futility, after which "the victors shed tears of sorrow and then repentance."[66] Furthermore, in Gandhi's view the battle symbolizes something internal rather than external. Central to Gandhi's religious imagination, and to his reading of the *Gita*, is the notion that "The battle-field is our body," which literally depends for its life upon the destruction of other forms of life.[67] Make no mistake, Gandhi points out; unless and until we attain Mōkṣa, in this life all of us are both slayers and slain. In the moral world, as Gandhi understood it, killing may be better than fleeing in cowardice;[68] nevertheless, he asserts, we can and should make conscious choices about what and when to kill. Indeed, we define our humanity in large measure by just those choices. Gandhi's concept and method of *satyagraha* was built on the belief that what "distinguishes man from all other animals is his capacity to be non-violent."[69]

Gandhi's colleague, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, advanced a similar interpretation of the *Gita*. "To speak the truth," Bhave asserts, "the

64 Sharpe, *The Universal Gita*, 71.

65 Arvind Sharma, "Hinduism" in Arvind Sharma, *Our Religions* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 52.

66 Mahadev Desai and Mohandas K. Gandhi, *The Gospel of Selfless Action, or the Gita according to Gandhi* (Ahmedabad: Navajiva Publishing House, 1946), 128.

67 Mohandas K. Gandhi, *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, ed. Raghavan Iyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), vol. I, 82.

68 Gandhi, *Moral and Political Writings*, I, 83.

69 Raghavan Iyer, ed., *The Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (Delhi and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 240.

real battle is only within ourselves."[70] The battle that rages in the *Gita*, as Bhave reads it, is the "conflict between divine and demonic tendencies."[71] And "the essence of the demonic character" is summed up by "the three *asurik* ambitions: Power, Culture, Wealth."[72] Exactly these three words—'Power,' 'Culture,' and 'Wealth'—were used by Emerson as titles for the second, fourth and third chapters, respectively, of *The Conduct of Life* (1860). He was working on this book at the same time he penned "Brahma." What in the name of Brahma did Emerson embrace, one wonders, when he "turned his back on heaven"?

To assert that "Brahma" is in some sense a 'demonic' poem would take the present argument into theological territory I would rather not explore, let alone defend. Instead, I conclude by arguing that American history clearly demonstrates how the Civil War failed to achieve the moral resolution Emerson envisioned for it. During the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and '60s, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., often asserted that the South's system of racial segregation was "a new form of slavery disguised by certain niceties of complexity."[73] To the extent that the American Civil Rights movement succeeded where the Civil War failed, the power of King's pacifism and the shortcomings of Emerson's militarism are both illustrated by the consequences of history.

Ethical and religious alternatives to killing other human beings always exist. Are we not better people, creating better karma, if we choose the path of ahimsa? Men and women who strive to oppose injustice in the contemporary world act wisely when they consider and create nonviolent options for resolving conflict. Today "the choice is either non-violence or non-existence," Dr. King once said.[74] Gandhi and King (and their followers) identified, developed, and practiced more effective and more humane strategies for resisting oppression than the "muscular Vedanta" Emerson advocated a century and a half ago.

70 Acharya Vinoba Bhave, *Talks on the Gita* (Kashi, UP: Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1958), 233.

71 Bhave, *Talks on the Gita*, Chapter XVI.

72 Bhave, *Talks on the Gita*, 240.

73 M. L. King, Jr., *Strength to Love* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 6.

74 King, *Strength to Love*, 140.

In the contemporary world religious methods for social transformation that are both creative and non-violent continue to be developed. Women peacemakers of recent times (as discussed, for example, by Elise Boulding,[75] Michael Henderson,[76] or Elizabeth G. Ferris[77]) offer guidance and inspiration for those seeking what Joan Bondurant called the "conquest of violence" in her classic study of Gandhian methods of conflict resolution.[78] And so do the scholarship, teaching, and leadership of Dr. A. Pushparajan. As one millennium was ending and another beginning, the second World Parliament of Religions (1993) adopted a declaration that eloquently urges religious and non-religious people alike to "commit ourselves to a culture of non-violence and respect for life."[79] Dr. Pushparajan's life and work illuminate and strengthen that "culture of non-violence." Can we, in the twenty-first century, afford to countenance a lesser commitment?

75 Elise Boulding, *Building a Global Civic Culture: Education for an Interdependent World* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990).

76 Michael Henderson, *All Her Paths Are Peace: Women Pioneers in Peacemaking* (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press, 1994).

77 Elizabeth G. Ferris, "Women as Peacemakers," in Aruna Gnanadason, Musimbi Kanyoro and Lucia Ann McSpadden, eds., *Women, Violence, and Nonviolent Change* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1996).

78 Joan V. Bonduarnt, *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965).

79 Hans Küng and Karl-Joseph Kuschel, eds., *A Global Ethic: The Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions* (London: SCM Press, 1993).

Part - V

Cherishing Our Social Home

SOCIETY
as Our Home

EDUCATION IN TRUTH, DIALOGUE AND RELATIONSHIP

Between Gandhian 'Experiments in Truth' and Postmodern Skepticism

David Fleming, sm

Abstract: *A reflection on the philosophy of education and research in our time seems appropriate for this volume honoring Dr. Pushparajan as a Gandhian educator. In the 'post-modern' context that prevails in the contemporary academic circles, insecurity and skepticism often call into question the commitment to objective truth and transformative social values. Academic life may be reduced to a mere analysis of interacting perspectives and social constructs, based on suspicion of underlying motivations rather than on the attempt to grasp the truth or enrich society. For centuries, the Indian tradition has found a place for the reflection of multiple perspectives without yielding to skeptical relativism. Gandhi's commitment to 'experiments in the truth' is a prime example of an approach to truth that is dialogical, inter-disciplinary, and still unambiguously committed to the discovery of ultimate truth and to the betterment of society. In this tradition, all truth is seen to be relational, even though not merely relativistic. The paper concludes with a series of affirmations about dealing with universal truth and absolute value in the contemporary academic environment. It advocates a holistic person-centered approach based on awareness of relationships and on interdisciplinary dialogue. It stresses the importance of an inclusive vision of education and research aiming at transforming society for the better, and argues that this perspective is possible in our times.*

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1. Introduction

It is a privilege to make a small contribution to this volume honoring the person of Professor A. Pushparajan. As an educator, Pushparajan has prolonged and refreshed the Gandhian vision—a vision so often venerated in theory but neglected in practice. In the spirit of the great Mahatma, Pushparajan has focused on questions of faith, freedom and value that are fundamental to India and perhaps to every culture. He has approached these questions with sensitivity to the inter-relations between differing perspectives emerging from different religious traditions.

In his lectures and writings, Pushparajan has illuminated Gandhi's 'experiments in truth,' and the special kind of *satyagraha* which is at once intellectual and political, a grasping for *satya* understood as 'truth' and 'existence' itself. In Gandhi's understanding, this truth is to be grasped and explored in dialogue and relationship with people of all perspectives who are committed to the freeing and betterment of humanity.

Pushparajan has devoted his life to being a Gandhian educator who is fully Indian and at the same time fully Christian. As a deeply committed Roman Catholic and as a professor of inter-religious dialogue at a secular government university, he has formed a significant cadre of leaders from all religions who are respectful and well-informed about world religions and are eager to dialogue in a common search for multi-faceted truth. He has had a particularly strong impact in forming leaders for his own Indian Christian community, both in the secular university context and in a series of key seminaries all over India. He has taught his students, Christians and others, to pursue religious questions in a dialogical, inter-religious way, with deep and well-informed respect for the profound convictions of believers in all religions.

Thus it seems to me that a reflection on a philosophy of education in our times is appropriate in this volume. I hope to make a small contribution to a style of dialogical education about foundational truths and values which is so greatly needed in our current 'post-modern'

world, marked by insecurity and skepticism.[1] At the same time, in this essay I aim to reflect on the Gandhian style and methodology of educating, of which Pushparajan has been an outstanding practitioner.

2. Multiple Viewpoints and Their Interaction

A familiar tale from ancient Jain literature speaks of six blind men approaching an elephant for the first time in their lives. One of them, patting a leg, declared it was a pillar; another, feeling the trunk, argued that it was a tree. The blind man who caught hold of the tail thought it was a rope, while another (feeling the belly) claimed it was a wall, still another a fan (rubbing the ear); and the final one, fingering the tusk, thought it was a pipe. Each argued insistently for his own point of view, claiming that he and he alone was right. Finally, a passing wise man with good eyesight calmly explained to them that: 'Each one of you is right in his own way. You differ because you touched different parts of the elephant. Actually the elephant has all the features you describe." So the argument among the blind men ended and each one felt vindicated, his truth respected. "Truth is one; the sages speak of it in many ways," says a still more famous and more ancient passage of the *Ṛg-Veda*.

These ancient affirmations from a multi-cultural and multi-religious society suggest that there may be some truth and value in every perspective. Sometimes any individual will see this truth and value, sometimes not. Rather than arguing like the blind men, we should say, "May be you have your reasons; may be there is some truth in your point of view."

Yet the search for truth will degenerate if there is no commitment to something definitive. The approach advocated by the Jain story could be understood as a subtle argument not so much for mutual respect and dialogue as for skepticism, a way of side-stepping bitter disagreement and relativizing all truth. In fact, the story of the blind

1 An earlier version of some aspects of the following material was presented in a faculty lecture at St. Mary's University (San Antonio, Texas, USA) in 2013 and has appeared in my book *A New Fulcrum: Marianist Horizons Today* (Dayton, Ohio: North American Center for Marianist Studies, 2014), 163-75.

men first appeared 2500 years ago in the teaching of Mahavira, founder of the Jain religion, which was already then and has ever since been a small minority in the Indian panoply of religions. Mahavira seems to have wanted to teach his adherents to be nonviolent and tolerant toward the viewpoint of others, to live in harmony with those who think differently. No doubt this irenic but sometimes skeptical view has saved his followers from a good deal of persecution.

But skeptical irenicism cannot be the final word. The Jain story also affirms that each perspective contains an aspect of a truth that is more absolute. It suggests that we may sometimes discern a richer truth through dialogue. The story recommends a brilliant and subtle system of Indian logic called *anekantavada*—'every-sided-ness' or the theory of 'manifold predications.'

3. Post-modern Relativism

Certainly these ancient Indian sources demonstrate that a critical and relativistic approach to truth, which today we think of as characteristic of 'post-modernity,' is by no means entirely new.

In our times post-modern relativism seems to dominate the world of thought and holds priority as a self-understood doctrine among many academics. Scholars often doubt that contemporary academic life can be compatible with a commitment to a clear set of truths, beliefs and values. Contemporary academic life initiates thinkers and scholars into a culture that prizes critical suspicion and relativizes absolutes. Truths, beliefs, and values, it seems, can always be reduced (is 'trivialized' too strong a word?) to mere *perspectives.* And one perspective seems as good as another. Better stated, perspectives are thought to be chosen, consciously or not, in function of utility and profit rather than in some idealized search for absolute and objective truth or value.

In this post-modern context, a Gandhian search for 'experiments' with truth or an effort at *satyagraha* (understood as 'grasping the truth' and clinging to it insistently and stubbornly) hardly makes sense. Intellectual life easily becomes little more than a learned interchange of interesting but debatable viewpoints.

Can an educational project focusing on truth and values be envisaged in today's postmodern setting, where truth often seems to depend uniquely on social context and no more? Will a Gandhian stance clearly oriented to undisputed values like truth and freedom condemn one to being an academic outsider, almost a representative of some bygone age? In order to sharpen and concretize the question, is it possible to represent one's own convictions while still engaging in respectful and open dialogue with those from other traditions?

The tradition of Gandhi and Pushparajan argues for something beyond pure relativism. While welcoming the validity of different insights and perspectives, this tradition points to some truths and values that are valid for all, not only for specific and limited points of view. In this tradition, educators and thinkers can aspire unapologetically to illuminate and also to transform the contemporary world in a meaningful way, trying to make it recognizably better.

4. Postmodernity and Suspicion

In contrast, postmodern thinkers note that the past two centuries have seen the rise and fall of many ideologies and 'grand ideals.' Colonialism was glorified as an idealistic project by one century, then vilified as racist and exploitative by the next. Communism generated epoch-making historical conflicts, but now seems almost to have passed from the scene, merely one more political option prone to abuse and corruption. The same is true for ideologies of 'making the world safe for democracy,' or promoting the 'self-determination of peoples.' Even scientific paradigms and models long thought unassailable, such as those of Newton himself, have been abandoned or relativized, subsumed into other syntheses.

Grandiose attempts at social engineering of all types have failed. Contemporary thinkers have unmasked a great many political, social, economic and religious idols without offering viable replacements. Our times have deflated one pretentious heritage after another. It is sobering to realize that today's discredited perspectives were once sustained by leading thinkers who were very modern and very idealistic.

Those who call themselves 'post-modern' profess not to see a place for any kind of universal truth or value. For them, the essence of the intellectual life is criticism. 'Truth,' they claim, is not objective, nor is it fixed forever. It is a social construct. The same is true for values. Based on its own interests, each society and each group constructs its own reality and its own viewpoints, which may well be discredited in the near future.

Postmodernists approach each viewpoint with critical suspicion, seeking to unmask underlying personal and social interests. They apply this approach to deconstructing 'grand narratives,' like the Bible, the 'Judeo-Christian tradition,' the Hindu *sanatana dharma,* or Gandhian *satyagraha* itself. Such grand narrative traditions, along with a host of others in philosophy, religion and science, are viewed merely as projections of groups with particular interests. Life in this view is characterized by plurality and the interplay of different interests rather than by universal truths or values.

In the postmodern view, certainty can never be attained. At best, the thinker can shed light on a diversity of viewpoints. The decision to adopt one viewpoint or paradigm instead of another seems to be a matter of personal preference rather than objective analysis. Skepticism and a well-honed sense of critical suspicion are seen as the sanest intellectual approach to life. Such postmodernism exerts a strong, often a dominant, influence within *academia* today.

5. Relativism, Relationality and Dialogue

Participating in the intellectual life of our time, many scholars have come to discover that every truth and value is illuminated by its context and its relation to time and place. They have found the insights of such contextual relationships rich and enlightening. They may have come to feel that no truth has a final, unchangeable formulation, valid without nuance or rethinking for every time and place.

Even though Pushparajan's Catholic intellectual tradition opposes pure relativism, it is interesting to note that a certain sense for the relational nature of truth is firmly grounded in it. Sensitivity for the

'analogy of being' and for a constantly growing 'development of doctrine' lies close to the heart of this tradition. Actually, the Catholic intellectual tradition, with its long-standing emphasis on integration and cultural sensitivity, is strong on relationality, even though it rejects pure relativism.

It may be helpful in this context to distinguish 'relativism' from 'relationality.' *Relativism* is the reduction of truths and values to mere functions of particular times, places and interests; it leaves no room for absolute truth or goodness. *Relationality* also seeks to illuminate all truths and values as they are understood and formulated in different contexts, but it does not reduce them merely to products of those contexts. Probably most educators will agree that all truths and values are relational, in the sense just explained. This was surely a key element in Gandhi's 'experiments' with truth.

Contemporary academics seek to be interdisciplinary. They recognize the contributions of a variety of approaches to any question. They admit that a multiplicity of perspectives and a variety of insights often interact to correct and nuance one another.

Still, no matter how broad a place is left for varied horizons and perspectives, ultimately Pushparajan's Catholic tradition (like that of many other religions) espouses some definitive beliefs and values. Though it is able to appreciate and learn from many viewpoints and from the relational nature of reality itself, it is not pure 'relativism.' It does not think of every truth as simply fodder for critical deconstruction. There is more to life and thought, it affirms, than *anekantavada,* 'manifold predication.'

6. Can Education still Stress Universal Truth and Absolute Values?

In the foregoing I have simply raised an issue, sketched what I see as the predicament of educators and thinkers who are committed to enduring and universal truth and values in a postmodern academic environment. Clearly, most academics (like most people in general) do not carry any such stance to its logical conclusion of absolute

skepticism. Even the most convinced postmodernist, like the most convinced traditionalist, may fudge a bit at the edges. Yet it is very important to know where we stand on these matters, not as specialists in epistemology or in the philosophy of education, but as practical educators and researchers.

As a highly diversified group of specialists in postmodern *academia*, can we still speak of 'pursuing the truth' and 'transforming society for the better'? Or is there nothing more in our task than deconstruction and criticism, 'manifold predication' (*anekantavada*)? The question is not abstract but practical. It touches the approach and outlook of all academics.

Having attempted to frame the issue, in this short essay, I would simply like to propose seven basic starting points that might in this time channel and focus reflection and dialogue about our task as scholars and educators, our philosophy of educating. These affirmations are written for those of us like Pushparajan who seek to live in contemporary academic life with some horizon beyond 'post-modern' critical skepticism. Though some of these starting points may seem obvious or platitudinous, I believe they provide an indispensable base for further exploration and dialogue.

6.1. Education Should Aim at Holistic Formation of Persons.

An educator's focus should be first of all on the good of the person, on holistic human development. Education is not limited to academic or professional discipline alone. Most educational and religious traditions will not be content with training good academicians or good professionals and competent workers. Education serves economic and societal purposes, but transcends them. An educator who aims only at good professionalism with no broader horizon may be compared to a 'technician of instruction' in an academic 'factory.' To stop with goals dictated by the economy and the job-market is too limited.

For example, education for the narrative imagination and the appreciation of beauty aims at forming a human person more than at practical and professional utility. Education that has no horizons beyond the academy, the profession and the workplace is too easily

instrumentalized, co-opted, consciously or not, by dominant political and economic paradigms and interest groups. Educators in the tradition of spiritual leaders like Gandhi should aim at the integrated formation of a human person, who can make academic and professional choices from the perspective of what is universally true and good.

6.2. Not Every Conceptual Standpoint or Paradigm Is Equal.

A holistic human education cannot evade the choice of perspectives. Post-modernists rightly insist that we can analyze and evaluate reality from varied viewpoints, but some viewpoints are better, richer than others. Holistic human education will emphasize those perspectives which are more relevant and beneficial. These certainly will include quite grand ideals, such as:

- the efforts to increase human happiness,
- respect for human rights as well as the integrity of the environment,
- the desire to pass on a better world to future generations,
- the effort to enter empathetically into the cultures of those who are different from oneself,
- the search to unite people in the pursuit of social betterment

Such difficult idealistic goals cannot be simply discounted. They are never fully attained, but good education and good learning must not lose sight of them. Education and research should build on paradigms that move in these directions and avoid reductionist paradigms that do not.

6.3. Possibility of Exposing an Orientation to Truth and Values as the Basis of Academic Life.

Though we may see our commitment to truth and values as fully defensible, postmodernists may have a grain of truth in seeing this commitment as at least in part faith-based. It rests on the conviction that there is an all-good God who has given us the gift of creation, which manifests "through a glass darkly" (Cor. 13, 12) the mystery of truth, goodness and beauty which is God. This viewpoint is the

core of Pushparajan's Catholic intellectual tradition and it is shared, as Gandhi showed, by many other religious traditions, including Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist ones. Today this faith-base needs frank acknowledgement, further grounding and probing.

Some educators and scholars may find such convictions mere sincere aspirations rather than settled and clear certainties. But educators from quite varied traditions need not apologize for a fundamental orientation to objective, universal truth and value which is more than simply 'another perspective.'

6.4. Relationality of Truth and Value

Truths are interrelated, illuminating and modifying one another. One-sidedness in thinking and acting leads to conflict and error. Relational, dialogical pluralism should characterize our approach to the intellectual life. Multiple approaches to truth and value retain their validity, but they must be subsumed into a focus on holistic development of persons. The pursuit of truth and value across a lifetime requires a blend of many perspectives.

Postmodern insights may teach us and our students a sane sense of critical thinking, help us recognize the social conditioning in which we all live, and alert us to the dangers of being instrumentalized or co-opted. Still, the ultimate aim of pursuing new insights and paradigms is to enrich our understanding of truth and our pursuit of social betterment.

We must live and teach critical thinking, and not be afraid to investigate. However, mere criticism is not the be-all and end-all of intellectual life. Criticism alone, without any goal or long-range vision, without a grasping for ultimate truth, being and value, will be vapid and empty.

6.5. Education Must Be Interdisciplinary and Dialogical

We need to reflect on reality in an inter-disciplinary way. We need to help people recognize, as the six blind men finally did in the Jain parable, that each viewpoint may contribute some truth to the fullness of reality. At every level from early childhood to doctorate and

beyond, educators should hope to integrate a variety of approaches and insights.

An educational tradition should not be a community of people who all stem from the same background and the same way of thinking. We should value variety and see it as a source of enrichment. Our community should be built on the principle of remaining at the table of dialogue and interacting from different perspectives, but always in order to achieve wiser and deeper vision. Thus, we might term our journey toward truth and value as 'dialogical realism,' integrating the varied insights of our companions and colleagues. But all should be striving to deepen universally valid truths.

6.6. Necessity of an Inclusive Vision

Through education we aim at transforming the world in which we live today and the world which our students will shape tomorrow. We aim to motivate students and professional colleagues to make a beneficial difference in human society. We believe that insights and practices rooted in varied traditions, as well as in ongoing dialogue with new discoveries, have the potential to better our world and society.

Above all, we aim to foster the development of persons who feel motivated to better the world in which they live and work. A commitment to underlying objective truth and a basic consensus about the common good and about values lay foundations for the positive transformation of society.

6.7. Philosophical and Practical Relevance

Philosophically, the preceding points may appear obvious to some or, at the very least, quite abstract. They are hardly quantifiable in terms familiar to Newtonian thinking, and are hard to locate in any particular classical system of thought. Are they merely glittering generalities?

Rather, a commitment to the pursuit of truth and values is full of implications for the ethics and metaphysis of education and research. Such a commitment provides a framework for educators like Pushparajan or like Gandhi himself. They also suggest significant

norms for academic activity and inculcate a certain style of being educators.

It is my hope that these few reflections may be helpful as those who wish to continue this style of education and research seek to carry out their mission amid the swirling and enlightening intellectual currents of our times.

HUMAN FREEDOM AND DIGNITY
The Gandhian Perception

B. Joseph Francis

Abstract: *The article tries to answer the question how M.K. Gandhi perceived human freedom and dignity. What caused the change in a shy individual who was a failure at first as a Lawyer. The question is answered mainly using his own words. It also has an indirect reference to the question of majority and minority and how one should respect the opinion of every person, irrespective of caste, colour or creed. The dignity of the person and his freedom was always respected by Mahatma Gandhi.*

1. Introduction

What is equally upheld and equally, and perhaps much more abused, is human freedom and human dignity. Human freedom is the quality of human will which participates in the freedom of God's will, who can and does all that is good and all that is in line with his very nature that is good. When the human being does likewise, he too becomes more and more like God. He is being truly in the very image of God. St. Iraneus' often repeated quotation bears this out: "The glory of God is man alive." St. Augustine similarly would describe the human situation as being placed between two tensions. On the one hand we are pulled towards actions *'sub specie boni'* (under the aspect of good) and on the other we are dragged towards actions *'sub specie mali'* (under the aspect of evil). In this existential situation, whenever we choose a course of action *'sub specie boni'* we become like God and when we choose *'sub specie mali'* we become unlike God. The freedom with which God has endowed the human being is sacred

and having created him in his own image and likeness (Gen 1.26-27), God will not dispossess him of it, come what may. The whole story of the Bible is a dialogue between God and the human being. St. Augustine is reputed with the saying: 'God, who created you without you, will not save you without you.' Expanding this thought we could say: at creation we did not exist and so God could not have asked us whether we would like to be created. But having created us and having endowed us with a participation in his own freedom as human 'persons,' he will not pull us into heaven against our will and he will not condemn us to eternal hell without our choice in the matter. Many a philosopher both in the West and the East, down the centuries, has reflected on the issues of human dignity and freedom. One such in recent memory but who is slowly given the slip in his native land, India, is Mahatma Gandhi (M.K. Gandhi 1869-1948) a real champion for his stand on human dignity and human freedom. In this brief article to honour Dr. A. Pushparajan, a Gandhian scholar, through a *Festschrift*, I wish to highlight some salient points on the issue, using to a great extent Mahatma Gandhi's own words.

2. Mahatma Gandhi Enters the Fray

In his autobiography entitled '*An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*'[1] he describes his early years as a shy young man who was tongue tied and could not even make a public speech. His years in London, studying Law provided him with ample opportunities but he could not come out of himself. This malady continued even when he returned to India having registered himself as a barrister in London. Back in India, he could not even plead successfully a single case in the courts. Almost to run away from the situation and do a simple job as a legal assistant he went to South Africa to work under an Indian firm of Dada Abdulla & Co. It was his experience there when he saw how Indians were forbidden to walk on the foot-paths and had to walk on the roads in company of horses and other animals, he was shocked by the degradation accorded to fellow

1 Gandhi, M.K., *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (trans., from Gujurati by Desai Mahadev), (London, Phoenix Press, 1949). Originally it appeared as a series of articles in his weekly magazine *Navajivan* from 1925-29.

human beings because they were not white men; this made him boil within. The final nail was struck when he was kicked off a rail coach in the middle of the night in a remote railway station and his luggage thrown on to the platform without much ado. All this, though he had a valid first class ticket! The incident transformed him. This tongue tied individual was to become an eloquent lawyer defending the cause of poor Indians in the South African courts. On his return to India he was to mesmerize millions of Indians and became a powerful speaker who galvanized them into action. Was it not because his human dignity was attacked?

3. The Two Decades in South Africa

If there was anything for which M. K. Gandhi fought resolutely all through his public life from the time of his great conversion in South Africa, it was to uphold human dignity. If he protested vigorously it was against the denial of this human dignity. This can be seen from the very early days of his new *avatar*. There are scores of letters, pamphlets and other materials in the first three volumes of the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi[2] to bear out this statement regarding the early days.

Here are some samples. Commenting in his newspaper *Indian Opinion,* dated 9-7-1903 on an item that appeared in '*Natal Advertizer'* he notes: "…Supreme the English are, and must remain in the colony. Nor do we want them to practice altruism in our favour. But we do request them not to use the supremacy in order to do us injustice, to degrade and insult us."[3] At about the same time there was an incident. The Coronation commemorative medals were given to the European school children but not to the Indian school children. M. K. Gandhi protested: "…the coronation celebration day is to be marked out for

2 *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, (*Publications Divisions, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, from 1958-2000, volumes I to C). The series contain all the writings, speeches and letters of M.K. Gandhi, arranged in chronological order. Hereafter this reference in this article will be CW. I shall give not only the volume number but also in the brackets the years to which it refers. The number (nr) and page reference would also be noted.

3 CW III (1898-1903), nr 285, (2nd ed.), 438.

the Indian children to realize as vividly as possible that the possession of a brown skin is a mark of humiliation and degradation in the estimation of the government of the colony."[4]

It was not only to uphold their dignity but also to claim for their right according to justice. The colonial government had passed a stricture that the indentured Indians have no right of complaint against the employer. In his letter dated 18-5-1899 to Mr. C. Bird, the colonial Secretary at Pieter Maritzburg he protested against the denial of the right and requested an amendment.[5] It goes without saying that these were attacks on human dignity, human right and denial of basic justice. An attack on fellow human beings he felt as an attack on himself and his right to self-defense. But here he differed from the votaries of violence and armed resistance. He found another method more effective than violence.

It was in South Africa that he discovered his potent weapon of *Satyagraha* which is 'to hold on to truth with all determination.' Part of '*Satyagraha*' is based on human dignity and human freedom. Yet no one can be forced to be a *Satyagrahi*, a firm holder of truth and who was ready to bear all suffering till the injustice is vacated. To be a *Satyagrahi* is a personal choice. Mahatma Gandhi was very firm on this even when some of the Indians wanted to force others to toe the line of those who abstained from work. The dignity that was included in this meant that you respected even those against whom one launched a *Satyagraha*. When a compromise of give and take was offered, Gandhi willingly entered into negotiation even though he was physically assaulted for doing so by a fellow Indian.

4. Dignity even in Prison

When he and others were imprisoned in South Africa, he was a model prisoner and asked others also to obey the prison laws as long as their human dignity was upheld. He was adamant in his protest whenever this human dignity, his as well as fellow prisoners' human rights were denied. This did not prevent M.K. Gandhi from making an ordinary

4 CW III (1898-1903), nr 199, (2nd ed.), 196-97.
5 CW III (1898-1903), nr 36, (2nd ed.), 85.

foot-wear for General Smuts as a token of his love for his adversary whom he did not hate in the least. This is indeed dignity with honour. The General had donated this as an exhibit and it still lasts as a testimony for what 'Satyagraha' really implies.

5. Gandhi in the Early Stage of Public Service in India: Self-Respect

On his return to India in 1915 he paid heed to the advice of Gokhale, the leader of the Moderate Group, and spent the time going round the country and he observed everything with his keen sense of observation. But circumstances and situations pushed him into action. Gokhale was dead by the end of 1915 and in 1919 Gen. Dyer had massacred innocent people who had gathered for a peaceful meeting. This was the notorious Jallianwala Baugh massacre in Punjab, India. Added to this was an executive order he had passed that the natives crossing a certain road, where an English woman had been attacked earlier, had to crawl on their bellies. This was downright demeaning. It was throwing to the winds human dignity and Gandhi could not keep quiet. Writing in his newspaper *Navajivan* on 18-7-1920 he notes that even a little girl who knows that she has an immortal soul can stand taller than six foot and a half tall English man. He says that "The day people of India come to have self-respect they will be strong and no General Dyer will then remain in the country."[6] He goes on to say that there is no special training needed for this but just a realization that God is with us and therefore we are strong: "Real power, therefore, consists not in having the physical strength of a giant but in strength of mind, knowledge of self and freedom from fear of death."[7] It so happened that at this time the '*Khilafat*' movement by the Muslims came up. The British at the end of the First World War (1914-18) had occupied Palestine dislodging the Turks. They abolished the caliphate. The *Khilafat* movement was for the restoration of the Caliph as the head of the Muslims. Now M.K. Gandhi astutely joined both the movements and the year that followed was electrifying. Along with the Ali Brothers he was able to address vast gatherings of Indians

6 CW, XVIII (1920), nr. 37, (reprint 1979), 58.
7 Ibid.

irrespective of religion or caste. Here, too, in this movement Gandhi saw an attack on the dignity, free choice of the Muslims. So he would help them to discover and uphold their human dignity.

He pleaded that Indians must learn to have self-respect which is another way of saying that they must be conscious of their human dignity. Speaking at Vadtal, a pilgrimage centre, on 19-1-1921 he said that as long as the Government was robbing us of our money, he had kept quiet and tolerated just as he tolerated the thieves who robbed his ashram at Sabarmati, but when the Government turned to attack his countrymen of their self respect how could he keep quiet as a bystander: "When however, the Government struck at the self-respect of my country, I woke up and realized that it was an incarnation of Ravana and must be destroyed."[8] At about the same time the Duke of Connaught from Britain had come on an official visit to India. In an open letter addressed to him on 2-2-1921 he says: "We desire to live on terms of friendship with Englishmen, but that friendship must be a friendship of equals both in theory and practice."[9]

He interprets *swaraj* (independence) as India having self-confidence in itself which is again another way of saying self-respect, dignity and consciousness of one's rights and duties. Writing in *Navajivan* on 26-6-1921 he declares: "Winning *swaraj* means helping the country to overcome its lack of faith in itself and to inspire self-confidence in it."[10]

6. To Keep Quiet When Others Suffer?

In 1923 he was a prisoner at Yeravda, Pune, India. A certain number of *Satyagrahi* prisoners were flogged and he protested against such inhuman treatment. Writing to the jail superintendent on 9-7-1923 he says that he tried his best to keep quiet by saying to himself that he was only a prisoner and should mind his own business but he could not keep quiet. His restless conscience would not permit and so he

8 CW, XIX (1920-21), nr. 129, (reprint 1979), 252.
9 CW, XIX (1920-21), nr. 154, (reprint 1979), 312.
10 CW, XX (1921), nr. 128, (reprint 1979), 271.

would lodge his complaint: "I cannot forget that I am a human being, or public worker and a reformer."[11]

7. To Love a Person Is to Respect his Freedom

Mahatma Gandhi never forced anyone to follow him. He respected the freedom of every individual. Even with his sons he would leave them to follow their own ways after he had his say and given his advice. He would tell them to consider him as their friend. Similar was his dealing with all others who came in contact with him. Perhaps one example would suffice. In 1918 a certain public worker who had given up his lucrative job after consulting Gandhi, now regretted his decision and wanted to go back to his former work. Gandhi tells him in a letter dated 19-3-1918 that when he took his advice he was free and had made a free choice and now once again he is free to reverse it. He should not think that he is being disloyal or doing something wrong. He tells him: "You will sink low if you treat even my advice as an order and believe that you must not depart from it ever so little."[12] In a speech at Mehemedabad on 1-11-1920 he declared that he does not want them to give up the slavery to the British to become his slaves. He only wished to influence their minds and hearts but not make them his slaves. He also would not be a slave to anyone: "I do not wish to make slaves of you, since I do not wish to become a slave myself."[13]

He wanted those who followed his lead in the non-cooperation movement to respect the contrary opinion of others. Writing in *Young India* on 27-10-1921 he warns them: "if however we enlist under our banner men by force, we shall have succeeded in establishing a worse terror."[14] His thoughts on majority and minority also need to be paid attention to. On one occasion when he was questioned about how to deal with a dissenting minority, he said: "Numerical strength savours of violence when it acts in total disregard of any strongly

11 CW, XXIII (1922-24), nr. 85, (reprint 1979), 169.
12 CW, XIV (1917-18), nr. 187, (reprint 1979), 272-73.
13 CW, XVIII (1920), nr. 229, (reprint 1979), 411.
14 CW, XXI (1921), nr. 153, (reprint 1979), 353.

felt opinion of minority."[15] To a question asked by Alice Schalek a reporter on what he understood by freedom he had this to say: "I want the freedom to make mistakes, and freedom to grow to my full height and freedom to stumble also. I do not want crutches."[16] This is truly a humble statement and a bold one too. To complete the reflection on the majority and minority issue, here is an example of how he reacted when his resolution at the Congress Working Committee was thrown out. He says in *Navajivan* dated 21-6-1931 that he accepted the opinion of the majority except when it is against principles. But he says: "…there are not many principles in life. One who at every step refuses, in the name of principle, to listen to others is autocratic and selfish. Questions of principle arise only rarely."[17] We admire here Mahatma Gandhi's thoughts about majority and minority. Basically it boils down to respecting the human dignity of my fellow human beings. They cannot be forced in any way even by a numerical weight. Everyone deserves to be listened to attentively, if what is said passes through the court of conscience (Mahatma Gandhi used to call it 'the inner voice'[18]). Therefore, if the inner voice said something to us, then we should at least respectfully listen to the minority opinion and carefully consider the reasons given.

8. Peace only with Dignity

Around 1931 Gandhi was called to Delhi to talk with the Viceroy to prepare the ground for amicable settlements. One Prabha Shankar Pattani made a public appeal to Gandhi that he should try to be accommodative with the Viceroy during the talks in Delhi. Writing in reply on 16-2-1931 he says with evident emotion: "Surely women being dragged by their hair and boys being whipped for no crime

15 CW, XXXIII (1927), nr. 469, 457-58. The report appeared in *Young India* dated 9-6-1927.

16 CW, XXXVI (1928), nr. 149, 127.

17 CW, XLVII (1931), nr. 1 Addenda, 423.

18 *Navajivan,* August 17, 1920 in CW, XVIII (1920), nr. 87, 123: "When, however, the still small voice within me suggests otherwise, I become helpless." Confer also CW, XX (1921), nr. 63, 129*; Young India*, May 25, 1932, in CW, XLIX (1932), nr. 586, 482: "For me the reasoned course of action is held in check subject to the sanction of the inner voice."

cannot make me happy."[19] He goes on to declare that he would not "put his signature to anything which may prove a trap for the country."[20]

During the Indian Round Table Conference's Second Session, Gandhi in a speech on 17-9-1931 stoutly defended the right of every adult to vote irrespective of whether he was educated or not educated, whether he was a propertied person or not. Though there were many other political ramifications to the question like further reservation according to religion, caste etc., what stood out for his astute mind and above all to be true to his conscience was the human dignity that everyone possessed and he wanted this to be respected. The quotation though long needs to be quoted in full:

> I cannot possibly bear the idea that a man who has got wealth should have the vote, but that a man who has character but no wealth or literacy, should have no vote; or that a man who works honestly by the sweat of his brow day in and day out should not have the vote for the crime of being a poor man. It is an unbearable thing; and having lived and mixed with the poorest of villagers, and having prided myself on being considered an untouchable, I know that some of the finest specimens of humanity are to be found amongst the poorer people, amongst the very untouchables themselves. I would rather forego the right of voting myself than these untouchable brothers should not have the vote. I am not enamoured of the doctrine of literacy that a voter must at least have a knowledge of the three R's. I want for my people a knowledge of the three R's; but I know also that if I have to wait until they have got a knowledge of three R's before they can be qualified for voting, I shall have to wait until the Greek Kalends.[21]

On the same occasion but speaking at a meeting of the Indian students on 13-10-1931 (which was reported in *Young India* dated 29-10-1931) he speaks with emotion about the poor of India and their suffering. He says that this type of suffering brutalizes not only those who undergo the suffering but also those who subject them to it.[22]

19 CW, XLV (1930-31), nr. 255, 180.
20 Ibid.
21 CW, XLVIII (1931-32), nr. 16, 30-31.
22 CW, XLVIII (1931-32), nr. 113, 145-46.

9. Freedom and Human Dignity: Based on the Human Soul

In 1942 during the Second World War a question was raised whether we should or should not take advantage of the situation and press on for independence. In an interview in this connection with the newspaper *The Hindu* on 28-5-1942 he said: "My conception of freedom is no narrow conception. It is co-extensive with the freedom of man in all his majesty. I shall, therefore, take no step without the fullest deliberation."[23] In a prayer meeting on 11-6-1947 when the partition process with the attendant horrors was going on, he spoke of the divine spark in the human being. This divine spark is unique to the humans: "I have not heard that a cow or a bullock or a horse partakes of the divine spark."[24] Then he continues to challenge his listeners: "Then if we have the divine spark, is it so that we may become frightened of each other or is it so that we may love each other?"[25] At the height of the Second World War he dubbed it as beneath human dignity in an interview to the Press on 19-7-1944 and reported in *The Hindu* dated 22-7-1944: "I cannot look at this butchery going on in the world with indifference. I have an unchangeable faith that it is beneath the dignity of men to resort to mutual slaughter."[26]

In a discussion with Negro soldiers from West Africa around 21-1-1946 he told them that to be free and not to be free depends on our mental state: "… The moment the slave resolves that he will no longer be a slave, his fetters fall. He frees himself and shows the way to others."[27] So one can enslave oneself or be free. This is part of the bigger theme of Mahatma Gandhi on *'ahimsa'* which he called among other things as 'soul force,' love, compassion, benevolence etc. It should also be remembered in this connection that Mahatma Gandhi refused to write any detailed description or thesis on '*ahimsa'* and even declared that no one can succeed in describing it fully though attempts could be made to do so after his death. The reason he gives is

23 CW, LXXVI (1942), nr. 193, 163.
24 CW, LXXXVIII (1947), nr. 105, 134.
25 Ibid.
26 CW, LXXVII (1942-44), nr.298, 406.
27 CW, LXXXIII (1946), nr. 12, 12.

also worth noting: "No man has ever been able to describe God fully. The same holds true of *ahimsa.*"[28]

10. Gandhi and the Caste Problem in Brief

The problem of castes in India has a long history and Gandhi's contribution towards solving it is also a long narration and would need another article. I only highlight in a few words pointing out Gandhi's own progressive understanding of it, which underwent changes in the course of years.

His wife, as expected, was very conservative in the matter of caste and kept her prejudices. Gandhi had to fight long with her on the question. At first Gandhi accepted caste differences as an economic necessity. At his wife's insistence he yielded at first to separate dining of different castes, arguing that eating is an animal function and it could be done in private and also in silence.

It took him some years to come out of this mind-set and opt for common dining to emphasize the oneness of all human beings. He declared categorically: "I consider that it is unmanly for any person to claim superiority over a fellow-being."[29] In the same article in *Young India* dated 29-9-1927 he gives his reason. It is because all have equally human souls: "All—whether born in England or America or in any circumstance whatsoever—have the same soul as any other. It is because I believe in this inherent equality of all men that I fight the doctrine of superiority which many of our rulers arrogate to themselves."[30]

He began to realize slowly that it is part of the inherent desire of sinful, selfish human beings to exploit the weak and the vulnerable for one's own advancement. He says in his newspaper *Harijan* dated 29-12-1933: "…my settled conviction is that modern untouchability is an institution having its roots in selfishness and the desire for exploitation of fellow-beings found to be amenable to suppression."[31]

28 CW, LXXXIII (1946), nr. 201, 180.
29 CW, XXXV (1927-28), nr. 1, 1.
30 CW, ibid.
31 CW, LVI (1933-34), nr. 429, 412.

It is also to be remarked that though some asked him to construct a temple in his ashram where he could keep images of different religions, he refused. For him the gathering under a tree in the ashram would be enough. There were no restrictive walls or boundaries. It is open. All are welcome whatever be his nationality or religion or caste or tribe. This was based on his understanding of the essential brotherhood of all human beings. Speaking at Annamalai University, Chidambaram, India on 16-2-1934 he declares: "Mine is no narrow creed. It is one of realizing the essential brotherhood of man. To my mind, the message of the Vedas is the unity of God and unity of all life in one God. How can *Harijans* be left out of that unity?"[32]

The next was a very bold, innovative step that he took. Many were requesting him to come over and bless their wedding. He said during the last stage of his life after 1940 that he would bless only inter-caste weddings where one of the parties was a *Harijan*. This revolutionary step and innovation sadly remains a point of quarrels and brutal murders and so-called 'honour killings' in many parts of India even today.

11. Conclusion

So one could ask: Has Gandhi failed? I am reminded of one of his answers to a rhetorical statement made about his movement of non-violence that it would fail even as Jesus Christ himself had failed. Gandhi in reply said that though he was not a Christian he would say that Jesus Christ was a true *Satyagrahi* and as such he cannot fail. He further said that the West has not genuinely listened to Jesus Christ or tried to practice it honestly.[33] Perhaps the same thing could be said of Mahatma Gandhi in India. He had a vision for free India, a vision that has to a great extent remained only a dream. We have not tried out Gandhi sincerely but all are content to say that he was a *Mahatma* and be satisfied by paying lip service on 2nd October, his birthday, which is a national holiday, put up statues and pictures which are occasionally also dishonoured here and there. There is also a move to honour the

32 CW, LVII (1934), nr. 174, 170.

33 CW, XX (1921). Nr.16, 27; also CW, LXVIII (1938-39), nr. 313, 278; cf., also CW, XLV (1930-31), nr. 384, 319.

man who murdered him in cold blood. But the country moves on. Could we deny that Gandhi's delaying tactics before independence, because he felt that our minds and hearts were not yet prepared for it, proved to be correct in the long run? While all the countries around India have had revolutions and changes of constitutions, India by far has been peaceful and has kept the same basic constitution.

Human beings are called to live as human beings. We are not angels. We can never be one but we can all do good to one another and be messengers of peace. We could learn to respect one another as human beings. The freedom and dignity of our fellow human beings should be sacred to each one of us. The choices that my fellow human beings make must be acknowledged as their choices. This is what Mahatma Gandhi showed in his life. There is no point in breaking another's head because s/he differs from us. This basic respect for others is something we should learn from him and practice it so that all may enjoy peace which is necessary for prosperity.

EXPERIMENTS WITH POWER
Gandhi, Gramsci and Foucault in Conversation

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Abstract: *The main thrust of the Festschrift in honour of Prof Puhsparajan being the "unsaid" in Gandhi, and the segment chosen by the author to delve into, standing under that hermeneutical thrust, being "State as a Home," the present Paper dwells on the themes of power and the state in Gandhi's thought in dialectical engagement, with the theories of power as emergent in the socio-political philosophies of Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault. In the first phase of the work, the author commences with the dialectical engagement of the theories of power/state in Gramsci and Foucault. In the second phase, the upshot of the preceding engagement is made into a hermeneutical launching pad for foregrounding the theory of power/state in Gandhi from a Subaltern perspective in the postmodern slant. In the process, as indicated in/by the quotes in the frontispiece, there emerges, from the palimpsest that is Gandhi, a multivalent signifier, beyond the unsayability/impenetrability of himself to the Social Sciences, a challenge to the bourgeois public sphere, and a catalyst in participatory action and humanization of Power/Knowledge. Against this background the Paper is entitled, "Experiments with Power: Gandhi, Gramsci, and Foucault in Conversation," mirroring/echoing Gandhi's own "Experiments with Truth."*

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"Indeed, as Gandhi, the icon and monument faded from view and a revitalized Gandhi emerged to occupy considerable political space, he became an increasingly contested multivalent signifier."[1]

"If it is my submission ... that Gandhi is impenetrable to historical and other social science discourses, then it is necessary to state that I intend my remarks to be viewed as a parable about the social sciences."[2]

"Participatory reason moves scientists from the laboratory into the field, move citizens from media spectatorship into place-based inquiry, moves pedagogy and professionalism from classrooms into civic engagement and public debate, moves art from commodified fashionable reactions to risky and original encounters within history and the life world."[3]

Introduction*

The main thrust of the *Festschrift* in honour of Prof Pushparajan being the "unsaid" in Gandhi, and the segment I have chosen to delve into, standing under that hermeneutical thrust being "State as a Home," I have, in this Paper, chosen to dwell on the themes of power and the state in Gandhi's thought, in dialectical engagement with the theories of power as emergent in the socio-political philosophies of Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault. And in the actual execution of the

1 *I gratefully acknowledge the inspiration of Dr Pushparajan through his life and writings, and more especially, his assistance to me, in narrowing down the search for the bibliography for the present work, through his valuable and pinpointed suggestions. So too, the timely support of two of my friends, Dr Joshtrom Kureethadam SDB of the Faculty of Philosophy, Salesian Pontifical University, Rome, and Dr Ananta Kumar Giri of the Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai, in obtaining the necessary bibliographical material, is gratefully acknowledged.
Lloyd I. Rudolf, "Postmodern Gandhi" in *Postmodern Gandhi and Other Essays: Gandhi in the World and at Home*, ed., Lloyd Rudolf and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009), 33.

2 Vinay Lal, "Gandhi and the Social Scientists: Some Thoughts on the Categories of Dissent and Possible Futures," 10; https://www.google.co.in/#q=Gandhi+and+the+Social+Scientists+by+Vinay+Lal, accessed on 30 June, 2016.

3 Herbert G. Reid and Betsy Tailor, "Globalization, Democracy and the Aesthetic Ecology of Emergent Publics for a Sustainable World: Working from John Dewey," in *The Modern Prince and the Modern Sage: Transforming Power and Freedom*, ed., Ananta Kumar Giri (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2008), 286.

work, I commence with the dialectical engagement of the theories of power/state in Gramsci and Foucault, and in the second phase, the fruits of the preceding engagement will be made into a hermeneutical launching pad for foregrounding the theory of power/state in Gandhi, from a subaltern perspective in the postmodern slant.

In the process, I hope, as indicated in/by the quotes in the frontispiece, there will emerge from the palimpsest that is Gandhi, a multivalent signifier, and beyond and through the unsayability/impenetrability of Gandhi, to social sciences a challenge to the bourgeois public sphere, and a catalyst in participatory action and humanization of power/knowledge.

"The issue here, as for Gandhi, is not the abnegation of power but its transformation from a means of domination and a mechanism of violence to a force for the positive remaking of human and natural life, the harnessing of the energy (in Japanese, *ki*) that flows throughout the Universe, but which can be focused, concentrated and utilized for healing, and never for destruction. Participation in society then becomes a creative act—the constant making and remaking of 'reality' to a pattern that suits our species' being."[4] This quote from Clammer aptly captures the programmatic of this work, and perhaps, the general thrust of the *Festschrift*.

With these introductory remarks as a heuristics for our enquiry, we now enter into the first phase of our work, namely, the dialectical engagement of the theories of power/state in the socio-political philosophies of Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault.

1. Dialectics of Power/Ideology in Gramsci and Foucault [5]

Gramsci, being a devoted Marxist and the founder of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), was literally 'a man of action.' As an

4 John Clammer, "Beyond Power: Alternative Conceptions of Being and the Reconstitution Social Theory," in *The Modern Prince and the Modern Sage*, ed., Ananta Kumar Giri, 570.

5 This section on Dialectics of Power/ideology in Gramsci and Foucault has been largely inspired by Asli Daldal, "Power and Ideology in Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci: A Comparative Analysis," *Review of History and Political Science*, Vol. 2/ 2, (June 2014), 149-67.

ideologue, he participated in the mass proletarian movements during the First World War, and afterwards he involved himself heavily in Italian politics, as a member of the PCI. Hence, it is not surprising therefore to find in Gramsci, an action-oriented political philosophy. He was concerned with the empirical, as well as theoretical problems of communism. So, the questions of power and ideology also have an empirical basis in Gramsci and can be found in the realm of the realpolitik. This explains the influence of Machiavelli on Gramsci and the basis of his conception of power embedded in 'the relations of force.' Power resides in the complex relations of force within society. It is present, observable and real. This power is mainly exerted by the dominant bourgeois class through the medium of ideology, by working on the popular mentality, through the institutions of civil society and thus establishing a hegemony using the State apparatuses. In Gramsci's conception then, power, ideology and the philosophy of action (praxis) are inseparable.[6]

According to Gramsci, the modern Prince—the political party—has two main functions: First to formulate a national-popular collective will which he organizes and expresses at the same time and to realize intellectual and moral reforms.[7] "Thus for Gramsci, voluntary action and the will of man is only meaningful when it is the collective will of the many or more precisely, it is the compact will of a class. The will generates power of action only when it is the united, coherent will of a class."[8]

According to Gramsci, there must be a unity of theory and practice which he terms as 'praxis.' Unification of theory and practice can be realized only in the sphere of ideologies. One must be able to develop a critical understanding of self, must be aware of his being part of a hegemonic force to "arrive to a further progressive self-consciousness in which theory and practice will finally be one."[9] The existence of an objective and absolute truth in the Platonic sense that

6 Ibid, 150.

7 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, ed., Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Novell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980), 133.

8 Asli Daldal, *Power and Ideology in Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci*, 152.

9 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Note Books*, 333.

is to be discovered and taught to the masses is apparent in Gramsci. This shows that the battle the intellectual should lead would be of influencing the mentality of the common men, his way of conceiving the truth. The objectivity of the truth is to the extent that it becomes historically and socially universal.[10]

For Gramsci ideology itself must be analyzed historically in terms of the philosophy of praxis as a *superstructure*.[11] He systematized what Marx described when he talked about the forces of popular beliefs and saw the ideology and the superstructural relations as more or less independent arenas of struggle, or in other words not easily reducible to the conflicts at the structural level. The significance of power and functioning of ideology in Gramsci can be better understood, if we consider briefly Gramsci's conception of the human being, which reveals the ontological basis of his theory. For Gramsci, there is no definite human nature. Human being is the 'complex of social relations,' and so, not static, constantly in change with the social relations, it *becomes.*[12] To create one's personality means to acquire consciousness of them...But this is not simple. To be conscious of them already modifies them. Even the necessary relations in so far as they are known to be necessary, take on a different aspect. In that sense *knowledge is power*.[13]

2. State as a Hegemonic Agency in Gramsci

The experience of fascism supported by much of the working-class forced Gramsci to rethink on the Marxist-Leninist theory of the State, bringing in new concepts like "the bourgeois hegemony in civil society." Gramsci defines the State as "the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities, with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but also manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules."[14] The main task of the State is

10 Asli Daldal, *Power and Ideology in Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci*, 154.
11 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Note Books*, 376.
12 Asli Daldal, *Power and Ideology in Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci*, 155.
13 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Note Books*, 352 -53.
14 Martin Carnoy, *State and Political Theory* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1986), 65.

to integrate the will of each single individual into the collective will, turning their necessary consent and collaboration from 'coercion' to 'freedom,' which in Gramscian idiom is a process of hegemony, of eliciting consent, from the members.[15] The major instrument of the State in creating the new type of civilization through hegemony is the Law. But the Law, in a Foucauldian idiom, does not only repress and restrict, but also produces and rewards. It reinforces those 'praiseworthy' activities of the citizens, just as it punishes criminal actions. In that sense, the Law operates mostly at the superstructural level.[16] From this positive and productive conception of Law stems the importance of the 'civil society' and its relatedness to the public sphere.

Unlike in the previous stages of history, with the advent of capitalism the bourgeoisie did something that other dominant classes in the previous stages did not attempt to do. They maneuvered to enlarge their sphere of domination ideologically. It assimilated the entire social network to its cultural and economic ideology in collusion with the State. But the State apparatus, this time, did not only serve to protect and promote the economic interests of the dominant class, but also operated on the superstructural level, to create a 'common sense,' in tandem with the new production system. The State very successfully, through the bourgeois hegemony in civil society, launched an independent ideological 'war,' to hegemonize the consciousness of the ordinary man.[17] Hegemony, in Gramscian terms means "the ideological predominance of bourgeois values and norms over the subordinate classes which accept them as 'normal'."[18]

In analyzing the Gramscian concept of hegemony, we have to differentiate between two levels of the State: the civil and political society. The civil society refers to those institutions which seem to be private (outside the sphere of the State control) and political society is what we ordinarily call the State (with all its juridico-

15 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Note Books*, 242.
16 Ibid., 247.
17 Asli Daldal, *Power and Ideology in Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci*, 157.
18 Martin Carnoy, *State and Political Theory*, 66.

military repressive apparatuses). But as it was indicated above, the civil society, in fact, is not outside the domain of the State, because it is constructed and operated by the same bourgeois Law. The only difference is that the institutions of the political society fall within the 'coercive' and 'punitive' aspects of the Law, whereas the organisms of civil society constitute in a Foucauldian terminology the 'positive' and 'productive' aspects of the same bourgeois Law. The civil society is the mechanism of domination, which functions through 'consensus,' whereas the political society functions through 'force.'

"Gramsci raised man's thought (consciousness) to a newly prominent place in the philosophy of praxis. Control of consciousness is as much or more an arena of political struggle, as the control of the forces of production."[19] Three words can be said to summarize Gramsci's notion of power: power is ideology.

3. Power/State in Foucault

Despite the fact that he assigned a relative independence to the superstructural elements and put the hegemony of the bourgeois civil society at the core of his analysis, Gramsci is still basing his analysis on a broader political theory of Marx. Michel Foucault, the French historian, on the other hand, chose Nietzsche rather than Marx as his point of departure. Foucault borrowed from Nietzsche his 'Genealogy of Morals.' For Foucault, Nietzsche "is the philosopher of power, a philosopher who managed to think of power without having to confine himself within a political theory."[20]

Foucault's main question was to 'theorize power.' Paraphrasing Giddens, we can say that Foucault, like Nietzsche, 'put power before truth." Power is circular, and power is capillary and the human being cannot escape from the complex relations of power that make up the society. It is interesting to examine Foucault's conception of power and ideology, vis-a-vis that of Gramsci, and try to find their points of convergence and divergence. To start with, both were admirers of

19 Martin Carnoy, *State and Political Theory*, 75.

20 Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowedqe*, ed., Colin Gordon, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 53.

Machiavelli. Foucault, like Gramsci, adopted Machiavelli's concept of 'relations of force' to do away with the system of Law-and-Sovereign. But Foucault went one step further. He tried to eliminate all conceptions of 'fundamental source of power.' 'It is in this sphere of relations of force that we must try to analyze the mechanisms of power… And if it is true that Machiavelli was among the few who conceived the power of the Prince in terms of relationships of force, perhaps we need to go a step further, do without the persona of the Prince, and decipher power mechanisms on the basis of a strategy that is immanent in force relationships."[21]

This is the basic difference between Foucault and Gramsci that we should keep in mind. Gramsci is a Marxist and locates power in some centralized agency, while Foucault 'dares' to follow the Nietzschean tradition and diffuses power relations into the 'very grains of individuals.' Foucault is not so much concerned with the 'why' of power, as with the 'how' of power, and concentrates on 'bringing to light power relations, locating their position, finding out point of applications and methods used."[22] Nevertheless, all his laborious research on power has a goal: to decipher the way human being is being turned into a subject through power relations. Contrary to almost totalizing view of human nature which makes the human a perpetual subject of some ideological construct, Foucault tries to locate the 'modes of objectification which transforms human beings into subjects,'[23] to formulate some points of resistance. Those three modes of objectifications which form the basis of Foucault's inquiry are: the objectifications of human being in the so-called scientific paradigms, for example, the human being who labours as the *locus* of a scientific analysis, the person who is the object of dividing practices, such as mad and sane, and the self-subjectivizing person, one who realizes oneself to be the subject of some practice, say, sexual subject. "This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him, which

21 Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 97.
22 Ibid., 211.
23 Ibid., 208.

he must recognize and which others have recognized in him. It is a form of power, which makes individuals subjects."[24]

The forms of resistance against those objectivizing power relations are generally in the form of 'anti-authority' struggles. These resistances provide space for the human beings, in asserting their right to be different. In that sense, Foucault is a 'humanist.' He gives weight to human will, and the capacity to avoid those objectivizing power relations. According to Foucault, there are historically three types of struggles: struggle against exploitation, domination, and subjection. Although all of them are present in today's social system, struggle against subjection has become more important. The reason why this kind of struggle emerged in the society can be explained by the emergence of the Bourgeois State in the 16th century. Foucault separates the struggle against domination and subjection from the 'major contradiction' in society that is exploitation. He treats them as if they were completely independent categories. In his analysis of struggle against subjection, Foucault for the first and the last time defines the State as a central source of power. He maintains that today the State has both totalizing and individualizing power. Similar to Gramscian theory of hegemony, Foucault says that the Western State has integrated old techniques of power from Christianity.[25]

One of the most important aspects of this, as Foucault calls 'pastoral' power, because "[I]t cannot be exercised without knowing the inside of people's minds, without exploring their souls, without making them reveal their innermost secrets. It is linked with a production of truth, the truth of the individual himself."[26]

Foucault implicitly follows the same line of argument in the 'History of Sexuality,' where he shows how a new political ordering of life was possible through the medicalization of sex as it became a concern for the State because of the need for 'infinitesimal surveillance' of individuals and a particular 'economy' of the body. Conscious or not, when he talks about this 'totalizing' power of the State, which tries

24 Ibid., 212.
25 Asli Daldal, *Power and Ideology in Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci*, 162.
26 Ibid., 214.

to produce a peculiar regime of truth, Foucault almost duplicates Gramsci's theory of hegemonic civil society. What he talks about is mere 'ideology,' centred around the State's non-repressive apparatus, although Foucault would definitely not call it as such.[27]

4. The Repressive Hypothesis and the State in Foucault

To state at the outset, Foucault is not a 'political scientist' in the Gramscian sense. He is not particularly interested in devising an all comprehensive theory of the State. Nevertheless, one can see in almost all the works of Foucault some concern with the State. He often remarks that it is wrong to locate power in the State apparatus, meaning that power should not be equated with 'Law and repression.' This means that the 'state' as such means for Foucault in a Weberian sense an entity with a legitimate power of coercion. What Foucault describes here is what Gramsci would call 'political society.' At the 'discursive level' Foucault seems to equate the State only with the 'political society' and thus rejects the notion of repressive power located in the State. But as we have shown at the end of the previous section, when one carefully reads Foucault, it becomes obvious that the State has some other kinds of power (as he calls "pastoral") in the society, to assure the disciplinary normalization of individuals, establishing a network of control through the medicalization of the body and so forth, that Foucault for some obscure reason, prefers not to explicitly include in his 'treatment' of State.[28]

Thus, when Foucault says that "to put power in terms of the State means to continue posing it in terms of Law and sovereignty," what he has in mind is only the repressive apparatus of the State (i.e. Army, police, penal institutions etc). But it is apparent from Foucault's own writings that the State is much more than this. It needs the soul of its citizens to create a regime of truth that cannot be done through coercion. Therefore we should not think that what Foucault says is basically different from that of Gramsci. Gramsci is also against the mere use of 'the repressive hypothesis' that is the political society as a locus of power. But he explicitly includes in his description of the

27 Asli Daldal, *Power and Ideology in Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci*, 162.
28 Ibid., 163.

State those institutions of civil society that truly diffuse power and creates regimes of truth... Thus we should see that as long as 'the repressive hypothesis' is concerned, Foucault and Gramsci converge. The difference is not one of content but only of terminology.[29]

The repressive hypothesis for Foucault has to do with equating power only with repression, punishment, coercion, with the sovereign person of the King, whose head hadn't been cut off yet. This juridico-discursive conception of power only establishes negative power relations. It insists on the rules, prohibits, and censors.[30] Foucault says that as long as power is located in the State apparatus, it will be conceived as negative and repressive:

> To pose the problem in terms of the State means to continue posing it in terms of sovereign and sovereignty, that is to say in terms of law. Describing all these phenomena of power as dependent on the State apparatus means grasping them as essentially repressive…State is superstructural in a whole series of power networks (*what then creates them? Shall we take them as God-given?*) that invest the body, sexuality, the family, knowledge, technology etc...[31]

Foucault rejects the idea of concentration of power in the State. He says that the 'spirit of Hobbes' Leviathan is dead.' Power is not localized in the State apparatus and "that nothing in society will be changed if the mechanisms of power that function outside, below and alongside the State apparatuses on a much more minute and everyday level are not also changed."[32] That's what Gramsci also means: the control of the political society changes nothing, the hegemonic institutions within the civil society (what Foucault calls 'mechanisms of power on a much more minute and everyday level') must also be done away with.

5. Power and Ideology in Foucault

Foucault defines power as "the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society. Power is not an institution,

29 Ibid.
30 Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 83-85.
31 Idem, *Power/Knowledge*, Colin Gordon, ed., (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 122.
32 Ibid., 60.

and not a structure. Neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with..."[33] Power is 'omnipresent.' It comes from everywhere and is produced every moment. Similar to Gramsci, Foucault also sees power as a relation of force that only exists in action. Power intrinsic to those relations of force has some basic features:

> 1. Power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared; it is exercised from many different points. 2. Power relations are not exterior to other relations (i.e. economic). Relations of power are not superstructural. 3. Power comes from below; there is no binary opposition between the rulers and the ruled. 4. Power relations are both intentional and non subjective. There is no power without aim and objective but there are no 'headquarters' of power either.[34]

Foucault's basic difference from Gramsci on the theory of power is that the latter saw power relations in terms of binary oppositions, such as the leaders and the led, the rulers and the ruled, etc. For Gramsci as well, power can only be discovered in the relations of force within the society, but it is localized in some points, say, in the symbolic persona of the Prince. For Foucault though, power, as well as the resistance it generates, are diffused and not localized in some points. He prefers to start analyzing power from the points where it produces its real effects. In other words, he engages himself in an 'ascending' analysis of power. Foucault separates ideology from the analysis of power. He maintains that power puts into circulation apparatuses of knowledge which are not ideological constructs.[35]

This is the major point of divergence between Gramsci and Foucault. While Gramsci sees power as directly linked to the ideological hegemony of the dominant classes, Foucault separates the apparatuses of knowledge that power creates from ideology. We shall now try to elaborate this point, starting by analyzing what Foucault means by 'ideology.' According to Foucault, ideology is a level of 'speculative discourse' that cannot explain the great technologies of power: "....The philosophy of the ideologists as a theory of signs and the individual genesis of sensations, but also a theory of the social composition

33 Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 93.
34 Ibid., 94.
35 Ibid., 102.

of interests, ideology being a doctrine of apprenticeship, but also a doctrine of contracts and the regulated formation of the social body, no doubt constituted the abstract discourse in which one sought to coordinate these two techniques of power in order to construct a general theory of it. In point of fact however, they (bio-power and discipline) were not to be joined at the level of a *speculative discourse*, but in the form of concrete arrangements..."[36]

Ideology for Foucault is not in the realm of material realities. It is an abstraction. Foucault sees ideology in an 'anachronic' way. He deliberately uses the categories of the 18th century thinkers who defined ideology as the 'sciences of ideas.' Thus, for Foucault, an abstract notion such as ideology cannot explain the real effects of power relations in the society. Another important point in Foucault's treatment of ideology is the importance he accords to the effects of power on the body. The power exerted over the body is more real than the power to transform, in the Gramscian sense, the popular mentalities.[37]

> ...As regards Marxism, l'm not one of those who try to elicit the effects of power at the level of ideology. Indeed I wonder whether before one poses the question of ideology it wouldn't be more materialist to study first the question of the body and the effects of power on it. Because what troubles me with those analyses which prioritize ideology is that there is always a presupposed human subject endowed with a consciousness, which power is then thought to seize on.[38]

Thus, for Foucault, there is no human subject whose consciousness is more prone to the effects of ideological power than is his body to the effects of physical force. The production of the 'knowledge' of the body is more of mastery for conquering the individual. What Foucault calls the 'political technology of the body' operates micro-physics of power around the bodies to subjugate man.[39] The road to

36 Ibid., 140.

37 Asli Daldal, *Power and Ideology in Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci*, 166.

38 Michel Foucault, *Knowledge*, Colin Gordon (ed.), (New-York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 58.

39 Michel Foucault, Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (2nd ed.), (New-York: Vintage Books, 1995), 26.

human being's soul passes from his/her flesh and bones, rather than his/her mind.

The major points of this dialectical engagement between Gramsci and Foucault on the themes of Power/State can be summarized as follows: Both Gramsci and Foucault make use of Machiavelli's notion of 'relations of force.' They therefore diffuse the power relations to the complex mechanisms of society. They try to implement a positive analysis of power. Power is not only a negative conception; power produces. In the case of Gramsci, power produces ideology, and vice versa, and for Foucault, power produces apparatuses of knowledge.[40] They both minimize the hypothesis that State's mechanisms of repression are the only generator of power. Although Foucault in his explicit analysis totally rejects the State as a source of power, he still talks about the *pastoral* power of the State as a form of totalizing power. In that sense, his treatment of the State is not remote to that of Gramsci's civil society. Gramsci and Foucault basically diverge at their treatment of ideology. While for Gramsci, to have access to people's consciousness is an enormous power and in that sense power is ideology. For Foucault, ideology is an 'abstraction' that cannot explain the real effects of power in society. Foucault gives almost no importance to the mental enslavement of people. What counts in objectivizing individuals is the power exerted on people's bodies. Contrary to Gramsci, Foucault puts emphasis on the particular technology of power that produces knowledge on people's body.[41]

In the ensuing sections, as indicated earlier, deploying the dialectical engagement between Gramsci and Foucault, on the thematic of Power/State as a hermeneutical launching pad, I attempt at foregrounding the theory of power/state in Gandhi from a Subaltern perspective in the Postmodern slant. I propose myself to undertake this exercise at three stages. In the first stage, I will be undertaking an Archaeology of Power/State in Gandhi, especially delving into the *Epistemes* at work in the approach to Power/State in the evolving thought of Gandhi, grounded in his socio-political praxis, as a leader of the struggle for

40 Asli Daldal, *Power and Ideology in Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci*, 166.
41 Ibid., 167.

Independence of India. In the second stage, I shall be engaging myself in a Genealogical exercise of deconstructing Gandhi as the initiator/ catalyst in the praxis of a counter-cultural subaltern public sphere. In the final stage, wherein I conclude the entire essay, I intend projecting Gandhi as a multivalent signifier and a catalyst in participatory action and humanization of Power/Knowledge. It is left unsaid, due to constraints of space, that this Archaeological and Genealogical elaboration would be more indicative than exhaustive.

6. A Romantic Rebel: Towards an Archaeology of Power/ State in Gandhi

Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*,[42] with the various strands of concerns and anxieties expressed therein, is a window to his experiments with, not only truth, but also power. Embedded in those experiments with truth/ power are also his reflections on the State as an agency of power and coercion. If in his adolescence, wishing to become powerful like the British, he would eat meat and ingest the intimate enemy,[43] and adopt what Partha Chatterjee would call "derivative discourse,[44] in *Hind Swaraj*, he would attempt at challenging himself and others, about the need of wanting English rule without the Englishman, wanting the tiger's nature without the tiger."[45] *Hind Swaraj* is not to be reduced to a mere nationalist tract. In it, Gandhi saw himself as part of a larger movement of European thought, of dissent, which resisted the empire and modernity. He considered the European dissenters as the 'other West.' It was this West that motivated and helped him to formulate his critique of modern civilization and articulate his alternative to it, and also shape his civilizational hybridity and countercultural mentality.[46]

42 M.K.Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, Anthony J. Parel, ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). *Hind Swaraj* seems to be a creative culmination of an intense process, personally challenging four-month stay in England, especially his discovery regarding the relationship of violence and non-violence to civilization.

43 See Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of the Self under Colonialism* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988).

44 See Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis MN: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 28.

45 M.K.Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, Anthony J. Parel (ed.), 28.

46 Cf., Lloyd I. Rudolf, "Postmodern Gandhi," 17.

7. Non-Violence and the Power in the Contextual Truth of Conscience

Non-violence was central in his nationalist mobilization against the British rule in India. Though the concept and the programmatic of non-violence is situated in the context of a religious temperament, it is also an engagement in a critique of the ideas of Enlightenment and an intellectual paradigm, earlier than the Enlightenment, which had faith in science and its enterprise, leading to a complete understanding of the world, resulting in its total control by human beings.[47] This Radical Enlightenment or Counter Enlightenment stands within the Romantic tradition. It is characterized by a radical politics of dissent, from its beginnings with English Radical sects, through English scientific free thinkers and dissenters, through Karl Marx to Horkheimer and Adorno, to Gandhi,[48] and of course, as stated earlier, the 'other West.' There is a philosopher and social critic in Gandhi, hidden behind the 'Mahatma' and the cunning Bania/shrewd politician[49] and his integral thought, centred on non-violence and *satyagraha*, has to be unearthed from the spiritual porridge, the saintly rhetoric, of 'purity of heart,'[50] in all its integral dimensions, epistemological, moral and political.

A question may be asked, why Gandhi the prophet of non-violence, advocated for himself and his fellow-Indians in their demands for greater self-determination more than constitutional means. He, in fact, was advocating an extra-constitutional strategy of civil disobedience. The answer lies in the fact that he wanted all of India to be in a movement, particularly the vast mass of its peasant population. He wished that the nationalist achievement not to be the effort of a group of elite, legally and constitutionally trained upper-middle class Indian men ("Macaulay's bastards"). His *satyagrahis* were not to be a band of elite vanguard, which had pretensions to being in grip with history and its forward movement, than the peasants, to whom they

47 Cf., Akeel Bilgrami, "Gandhi, the Philosopher," in Akeel Bilgrami (ed), *Secularism, Identity and Enchantment* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2014), 103.

48 Cf., Akeel Bilgrami, "The Political Possibilities of the Long Romantic Period," in *Secularism, Identity, and Enchantment* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2014), 201-02.

49 Cf., Akeel Bilgrami, "Gandhi, the Philosopher," 102.

50 Ibid., 108.

were giving the lead. He wanted the Indian masses to demand that the British left their homeland, and that they used the means for that, which were not merely derivative of the ideas and institutions that the British had imposed upon them. Otherwise, even if after the British left, Indians would be a subject people with their political imagination not yet decolonized.[51] This concern for the decolonization of the political and cultural imagination of Indians went deep into Gandhi and *Hind Swaraj*, as indicated above, is full of a detailed anxiety about the *cognitive* enslavement of the Indian mind which might even after independence never recover from that enslavement.[52]

In his striving for philosophical and moral integration, Gandhi also wanted to assist his fellow-Indians, to be cultivating the imagination of inclusivity, as regards religious and cultural pluralism, and also overcoming the evils of traditionalism, inscribed by hierarchy and the binary of purity-pollution. He distinguished between morality and the demands of conscience, and resisted the tendency towards intolerance through the imposition of principles in the abstract. He insisted that the *Satyagrahi* is not above violence, until he had removed criticism, based on the universalism of truth, from his heart and mind. For him, the power of truth in the example, that if we ourselves are good, the entire world will be good. Good conceived in this way, as exemplarity, breaks out of the subjectivity of one's conscience. The shift from principles to example frees us from the tendency towards moralizing and the consequent behaviour of criticism, and the psychological attitudes of resentment and hostility.[53] This is a methodological alternative to the tradition of moralizing.

Smaller the community, greater the scope for setting of examples, which challenge others; and that must be reason for his preference for the small *Panchayats* as a socio-political and economic unit. In a broader framework of integration, where *Satyagraha* and non-violence are intimately linked, truth is no more a mere cognitive

51 See Callaghan O' Marion, "Continuities in Imagination," in *Culture, Knowledge and Power: Decolonization and Imagination*, ed., Jan Nederveen Pieterse and Bhikhu Parekh (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 22-42.

52 Cf., Akeel Bilgrami, "Gandhi, the Philosopher," 103-04.

53 Cf., Ibid., 110-14.

notion, as constructed by Newtonian scientism against the backdrop of Traditional Enlightenment, but a moral and experiential notion. Truth is grounded in the conscience which searches in the context of a praxis. He is challenging the Enlightenment notion of truth as scientific, reductively cognitive and a matter of instrumental reason, which views reality as something to be controlled, and not a matter of moral and lived experience, and people and nature to be treated as objects of investigation and profit.[54]

8. Gandhi and Marx as Companions-in-Arms for Unalienated Life

The harsh words which Gandhi uses for Western Modernity in *Hind Swaraj*, as indicated earlier, are expressive of the fear that India would have to tread the same lamentable path of some worst aspects of politics and political economy that have characterized the passage of Europe from early to late modernity. Both Gandhi and Marx, standing within the Romantic tradition and culture of dissent, though from different perspectives, appealed to the same idea in their critical thought, the utopia of the '*unalienated'* life, lost in the context of Enlightenment Liberalism and mass society, leading to the transformation of the subject into an object and a wrong kind of detachment in relation to the world. Marx was trying to resist capitalism, and Gandhi, to avoid the path of European modernity's civilizational tendencies, at the centre of which was the capital and a certain dominance of science, under the watch of power and the profit-oriented wealth. The outlook that the new science of the period was shaping was precisely that which encouraged predatory commercial extraction in nexus with the commercial interests and with High Christianity. The dissenters in the Romantic tradition, of which Marx and Gandhi are late arrivals, were challenging this possessive individualism and they were an early version of what has come to be called as a critique of the market society, and an ethical alternative to the liberalism of the orthodox Enlightenment.[55]

54 Cfr. Ibid., 113-18.

55 Cf., Akeel Bilgrami, "Gandhi (and Marx)" in *Secularism, Identity, and Enchantment*, 129-41.

The conclusion of the late Marx, that capitalism in not inevitable universally, is quiet a piece with Gandhi's vision for India, which bypasses European modernity and if at all, it got a foothold in India, it would be entrenched, as Marx's analysis equally insisted on, with a logic that could be described in deterministic terms. These issues of nature and political economy were for Gandhi and his dissenting predecessors integrated with questions of knowledge and political governance. The dissenters were calling for a democratization of the sacred, which had been disenchanted by the votaries of Newtonian vision of the clock-winder God, who had been exiled from nature, and who had become the object of the expertise of the priesthood in connivance with established religion, science and commerce, leading to elite conceptions of law, medicine and political governance. The monarchs of power dealt with the populace, exactly like God dealt with the brute and purely material and desacralized universe. The dissenters in England and parts of Europe resisted these dehumanizing and desacralizing developments, anticipating the objections of Gandhi in *Hind Swaraj* and other writings, to elite medicine and expertise of lawyers and centralized forms of governance that would be based on expertise and not really on the norms and needs of the localities.[56]

That is how and why the theory that wealth is supposed to 'Trickle Down' to the poor, an abstract detached 'expert' response of the needs of the people, is proven to be a chimera in the political economy of capitalism. And it is the same logic of detachment, which impels the former Union home minister P. Chidambaram to call for the rejection of counterculture against the use of natural wealth, the counterculture, which he wants to reject being those who protest against the grabbing of land, by the mining and power projects. People who protest against the exploitation of nature are made to be inconsequential. The state and the rich are in nexus to shift-delete the poor from the face of the Earth. Even the most humane of the contemporary economists, who stands with the poor in his 'positional objectivity,' was seen to be justifying the dispossession of agricultural land for 'Development.'[57]

56 Cf., Ibid., 141-43.
57 Cf., Ibid., 143-45.

9. State and Secularism in Gandhi: Contextual Shift and Hope

"He found it at once a shallowness and insolence to think human beings can be made better by being made over into some abstract new form of being called 'Citizens'."[58] This lapidary, yet pregnant statement, captures for us Gandhi's well-known and nuanced approach to the State as a Post-Westphalian creation, especially in the European context, a 'soulless machine,' an agency of coercion, to be tolerated for the order in the society, and for ensuring the rights of the human beings.[59] In the Post-Westphalian European state formation, the state and the nation, stood in a hyphenated relationship, welded on nationalism/majoritarianism, and the process of enemy construction, having somebody within the state and without, as the Other. Gandhi detested the concept and the phenomenon of Nationalism and willfully strove to make the term to connote in the Indian context something *entirely* (emphasis, author's) different, and wholly synonymous with 'anti-imperialism' and emptied of the European genealogy of territory, race and religion. It is for this reason that he opposed Savarkar, more than he opposed any other religious figure of modern India, for it was his '*Hindutva'* that stood for the European method of modern politics, invoking a religious majoritarianism and cultural nationalism to build a Hindu nation and to legitimize a centralized state.[60]

If the state and citizenship in their Post-Westphalian origins had their history of ravages, secularism was thought to be the healer of these ravages. Gandhi was of the opinion that the ravages had gone too far and the secularist citizenship would not be able to repair the ravages caused by the nation-state-citizenship. When Gandhi expressed disdain for the idea of secular citizenship for the emergent free India as a preventive antidote for the ravages experienced by the European

58 Cf., Ibid., 145-46.

59 For a descriptive and nuanced account of Gandhi's approach to the phenomenon of the State, see Raghavan N. Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 252-60. See Anthony Parel, "Gandhi and the State," in *A Cambridge Companion to Gandhi*, ed., Judith M. Brown and Anthony Parel (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 154-73, for an itinerary of the evolution of Gandhi's thought on the State and the influences on him.

60 Cf., Anil Bilgrami, "Gandhi (and Marx)," 146-47.

nation-states, he was rejecting this entire idea of the nation with its Post-Westphalian European historical baggage. His response to the suggestion of secular citizenship for independent India was that there was no reason for the damages, which had occurred in Europe to happen in India, given the texture of life of the people in India.[61]

Along with the hollowness of Western secularism and its irrelevance for India, Gandhi was also critical of the concept of civility, which again was a result of scientific Orthodox Enlightenment, which privileged certain lifestyles and behaviours centred on expertise and knowledge. Civility was giving rise to a culture of doublespeak, where non-civility and cruelty could occur only in Mugabe's Zimbabwe and Saddam's Iraq, while Guantanamo will be in self-deceptive selective amnesia, be glossed over as if it *was not* there. If Gandhi showed studied indifference to the rights and constitutions of the civilized nations, it was because he could smell behind the self-deceptions latent in them a genealogy of an earlier period of lifestyles and aspirations to civility. They were all manifestations of an alienating process of desacralization and the consequent objectifying attitude of detachment toward both nature and its inhabitants, developing around the rise of modern science in nexus with the scientific ideologues, commercial interests and the religious establishment. This objectifying mindset had given rise to a political economy and political governance, which were destructively exploitative of nature and its inhabitants, and the elitist and undemocratic apparatus of rule and power/knowledge they set up.[62]

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61 Cf., Ibid., 147-48. See Akeel Bigrami, "Secularism: Its Content and Context," in *Secularism, Identity, and Enchantment*, ed., Akeel Bilgrami (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2014), Foot Note No.11, p.349 for an genealogical expose, which banks on historian Bipin Chandra, of Gandhi's own autobiographical and contextual shift, from disdain for secularism, and secularism for India, to his own acceptance of secularism, by 1940s, as a political fabric for the Independent India, given the changing socio-political scenario. Akeel Bilgrami, in variance with Bipin Chandra, is of the opinion that Gandhi himself, in spite of the contextual shift in attitude to secularism, caused due to the rise of Majoritarian tendencies even within the Congress, was hoping that India would tide over the incipient rise of majoritarianism, breathing the traditional air of mystical pluralism of living and lived dialogue of religions and common cultural traditions.

62 Cf., Anil Bilgrami, "Gandhi (and Marx)," 148-50.

10. Towards a Radical Politics of Unalienated Life

To overcome the alienation from nature and from one another, we have to overcome the prejudice that all value come from ourselves, as human beings and value cannot be found in nature, as value properties. We have to give political voice to demands coming from nature itself. We do, as of now, lack an articulated framework for it. But this must not lead us into despair. It took centuries for us articulate a framework within which we gave representative voice to our demands, when we, through much blundering and much resistance, built up our democratic institutions. In a similar vein, it is bound to take much careful and painstaking effort to think toward what an intellectual and institutional framework would like for giving actual representative voice also for something like the demands of value properties coming from nature. Gandhi's integrating and integrated approach to human, knowledge, nature, politics and power have the potential to build up such kind of broader framework.[63]

Going by the logic of the Gandhian integrations, where knowledge and truth as grounded in the human experience of fellow-beings and nature, we have to overcome the tendencies of a market-driven globalizing culture to ghettoize questions of nature as purely ecological questions, independently of the deepest social and economic questions that confront us. This partly explains the irony of the situation, where those who showed callous indifference to injustice and global poverty, until now, have suddenly become preoccupied with global warming. Conversely, the same people would think that human beings and their social relations are laden with value considerations, but nature is evacuated of values, fit only to be studied by the sciences as an object. This is indeed the modern form of superstition, arising from the shallowness of Orthodox Enlightenment, which both Gandhi and Marx have been trying to transcend from their radical critique of different aspects of modernity.[64]

Marx echoes the above call for a Gandhian integration in our journey towards an *unalienated* life. "The abstract enmity between sense and

63 Cf., Ibid., 163.

64 Cf., Ibid, 169-70.

spirit is necessary so long as the human feeling for nature, a human sense of nature, and also a natural sense of man, are not produced by man's own labour." [65] The abstract enmity between sense and spirit, echoed in the enmity between nature and value, that emerged in a specific stage of history can be overcome only by overcoming that epistemology that gave rise to it in forms of secular enchantment of nature, that restores, the "the human sense of nature" and "the natural sense of man."[66]

When the enmity between sense and spirit, and the rupture between nature and value have been overcome, there would be a triangular transformation of the values of liberty and equality and unalienated life, liberty and equality attaining a new meaning in the spirit of the Radical Enlightenment, championed by the Dissenters, in the Gandhian-Marxian grid of Power/Knoweldge/Human/Nature. The exercise of liberty will be under the rubric of, not an individualistic orientation, but a collective orientation. The exercise of equality will be built into the deliverances of the exercises of liberty in the mode of non-individualistic and unalienated responsiveness to the world, freed of the detached outlook.[67] This calls for a radical politics, where our quotidian decisions, as expressions of our practical agency are in tune with the collective orientations towards an unalienated life, ever being critical of our collective outlooks, lest they be domesticated by the very transformations, they aim to criticize. This radical politics has to be a process from below, involving the people, like the mass movement of peasants, which Gandhi envisaged as the vehicle of civil disobedience, in his attempt at the decolonization of both colonial imagination and colonial power.[68] The reversals of the order of society and situations and the transformation of power, contemplated through the reversals, call for little pockets of resistance, by the people.[69]

65 Karl Marx, *Collected Works, vol.3: Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (Mosco: Progress Publications, 1932, reprinted 1959), 375, as quoted in Anil Bilgrami, "Gandhi (and Marx), 170.

66 Cf., Anil Bilgrami, "Gandhi (and Marx)," 170.

67 Ibid., 172-73.

68 Cf., Akeel Bilgrami, "The Political Possibilities of the Long Romantic Period," 209-14.

69 Cf., David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 53-72, where the author stresses the importance of building up small spaces of

11. Postmodern Gandhi: Catalyst of the Subaltern Public Sphere

To start with, Gandhi is a Postmodern in his hermeneutics, in his approach to truth as contextual and in his interpretation of texts.[70] In their contest on development and the ongoing correspondence, Gandhi wrote to Nehru, 'My villages exist in my imagination.' As if to warn Nehru against privileging or naturalizing his vision of a modern industrial India, he continued with the remark that "After all, every person lives in the world of his own imagination."[71] Gandhi's emphasis on human capital, decentralized production and 'appropriate technology,' challenged modernity's emphasis on physical capital. Gandhi's call for the Congress to transform itself from a political party to *Lok Sevak Sangh* (a People's service organization), echoing his call for Constructive Programme, has been realized in the numerous NGOs, which form part of the civil society. Gandhi wanted a decentralized bottom-up state built on a foundation of '*village swaraj*.' He was against market capitalism, as we have seen earlier, in his call for an unalienated life, and equally against state industrialism and mass production.[72]

Gandhi was a tireless creator of civil society, as evidenced from his involvement in the public sphere, both in South Africa, and on his return to India. Without people's co-operation the state power loses its potency and legitimacy, as Gandhi showed through his non-cooperation movement in 1920-22 and again during the civil disobedience movement of the Salt Satyagraha. Gandhi associated centralization with coercion and decentralization with power. Power was located in the association of civil societies and the local self governments. In the tension between structure and agency, Gandhi showed that moral agency can change the world. For him, 'Independence must begin at the bottom.' Gandhi seems to be in agreement with Hannah

hope in the form of particular and localized struggles, which have to be networked into a great movement of struggle, especially against the forces of globalization, which cause uneven development in geographical spaces.

70 Cf., Lloyd I. Rudolf, "Postmodern Gandhi," 7.

71 Cf., Ibid., 22-23.

72 Cf., Ibid., 27 -35.

Arendt, who said that human beings are oppressed because they allow themselves to be oppressed. They are complicit in their oppression. As Gandhi too remarked, that the English have not taken India, but we have given it to them. As Arendt remarked, power corresponds to the human ability, not just to act but to act in concert.[73]

In his earlier works, Habermas defends the Enlightenment Project of Modernity, and he bases his reflections on civil society, on those theoretical foundations. Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*, in its critical attitude to modernity, reconfigures Western conceptions of civil society, associational life and public sphere. For Habermas, who built his idea of public sphere on the high note of bourgeois rationality, democratization of public sphere was undesirable. He dreaded a plebeian public sphere, as a 'marketplace of ideas.' Moreover, Habermasian public sphere demarcates between the public and the private, and excludes the effect of emotions. So too ethnicity, religion and language are seen as divisive forces. On the contrary, Gandhi's version of public sphere was not conditioned on literacy. In Gandhi's ashrams, there was lively exchange of ideas, and the exchanges were addressed to the heart, as well as the mind, and the private and the pubic collapsed borders in the common life of integration in the ashrams. He led his collaborators beyond the perspective of bourgeois public sphere. There the Harrow- and Cambridge-educated Jawaharlal Nehru and his anglicized and wealthy father Motilal, shed their Savile Row suits and lifestyles and donned the *khadi* of village India. Founded on truth as a moral experience and as situational, *satyagraha* made use of the heart and feelings and the mind to make of a movement of the peasants, masses and the elite, in one single public sphere. Unlike in the Habermasian coffee house, which ultimately relied on the state for change, the individual in civil society becomes the arena for change. Gandhi's concept of a democratized public sphere, because it is in keeping with the Habermas' 'normative ideal of the public sphere, seems to have the future.[74]

73 Cf., Ibid., 141-44.
74 Cf., Ibid., 147-63.

12. Conclusion: Gandhi, a Multivalent Signifier of Transformation of Power

Though Gramsci is in grip with the common sense and the good sense of the masses, as Asli Daldal remarked, there is in Gramsci the need to teach the 'absolute and Platonic truth' about the power and the hegemony of the state to the masses, and perhaps he has to achieve that task with the help of the vanguard of a revolutionary party along the Leninist lines. As we have seen, power for Gramsci, is ideology, to be communicated to transform the culture and consciousness of the masses. For Foucault, power comes before truth, and the subjects are constituted in the relations of power. In both, the Modern Prince has hegemony over the subjects and the power is for controlling the society, whether through the civil society or through the coercive instrumentality of the political society. What comes across in Gandhi, as different from Gramsci and Foucault, as those who have engaged themselves in the anatomy of power/state, is that Gandhi has consistently attempted to ground his discourse of truth/power in the bedrock of experiential knowledge[75] in an integrating grid of power/truth knowledge/political economy and political governance. This was being in an ongoing mode of experiments with power, as much as he was in an ongoing journey of experiments with truth.

That journey was equally one of ongoing discerning dissent, dissent with the powers of dominance, with the weapons of *satyagraha* and *ahimsa*, with which he moved the masses of India towards freedom and transformation of power and self-transformation.[76] As it has been made clear in our journey along with Marx, a master of suspicion, and Gandhi, a seeker of non-violent truth/power, Gandhi is the ultimate dissenter of the twentieth century, indeed of modern period, becoming

75 See Vivek Dareswar, "Politics, Experience and Cognitive Enslavement: Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj,*" *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol XLV No 12 (March 20, 2010), 51-58.

76 See Ananta Kumar Giri, "Power and Self-Cultivation: Aesthetics, Development and Ethics and the Calling of Poverty," in *The Modern Prince and the Modern Sage: Transforming Power and Freedom*, ed., Ananta Kumar Giri (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2008), 504-21; also Sapir Handelman, "Transforming Power and Freedom: From Voluntary Servitude to Non-Violent Resistance," *op. cit*., 464-70.

an icon of dissent, challenging us to the creative possibilities of dissent, as engagement with power, and challenging us to contribute to the creation of dissenting futures, especially in the context of sciences. [77]

While being appreciative of Gramsci's theory of resistance by the subalterns, and critiquing the theories of both Foucault and Arendt for their inadequacy for addressing the issues of violence and its many expressions, Kanchana Mahadevan remarks, "The increasing failures of political life are, perhaps, an indication of its impending revitalization. Political struggle would take place within these failures by resisting naturalism, an endeavour that demands self-criticism of oneself, one's religion, one's community, one's nation and one's gender…In short, political activity involves striving for solidarity that is yet to come." [78] Surely, Gandhi, the ultimate dissenter also could be the personification/icon/sling of that utopian solidarity.

77 Cf., Vinay Lal, "Gandhi and the Social Scientists," 33-34.

78 Kanchana Mahadevan, "Rethinking Power: Aesthetics, Dialogue, Hegemony," 125.

CONSCIENCE AND DIALOGUE IN COMMUNITY BUILDING

Michael Amaladoss, sj

Abstract: *When we speak of dialogue we normally think of interreligious dialogue and it is often set in the context of mission as proclamation. Dialogue is seen as a first step or means towards proclamation. It involves the theology of religions. But in two of its documents, namely on Religious Liberty and on The Church in the Modern World, the focus seems to be on all people of good will. These may belong to one of the religions or to none. The basis for dialogue with these people is not religious experience but conscience. Every human person has a conscience in which God has inscribed a law and a voice. This is obviously common to all humans and prior to religious differentiation. It can also be the common field for conducting a fruitful dialogue focused on building up a human community of peace and justice. As a matter of fact the document on the The Church in the Modern World, not only describes this conscience, but also lists a number of areas in which such a 'secular' dialogue can take place in and/or on family, culture, economics, politics, peace, etc. This inter-human dialogue has not received the same attention as inter-religious dialogue. Focusing on conscience, we also escape the problems and questions of a theology of religions. The Scholastics used to speak of the 'Natural Law.' It may be helpful to revive this dimension of inter-human dialogue based on conscience.*

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1. Introduction

The Second Vatican Council took a positive step in opening up the Church to dialogue with the other religions and with the world with its documents on Other Religions and on the Church in the Modern World. There was some dialogue with other religions happening in India even before the Council. The first Indian Benedictine ashram in Thannirpalli was founded in 1950. A theological dialogue was going on in Calcutta animated by some Belgian Jesuits with reviews like "The Light of the East." The Council was an encouragement. More ashrams were founded; dialogue groups were started in different places. Inter-religious live-togethers were organized in various places in India. The theology of religions was also being developed by many theologians. The two seminars on "The Inspiration of Non-Biblical Scriptures" and on "Sharing Worship" were particularly noteworthy. Indian theologians also contributed to the development of reflection on and the ministry of dialogue at the Asian level through the organs of the FABC. While the Vatican itself was still looking on dialogue as a step towards mission, the Asian Bishops and theologians encouraged interreligious dialogue as something worthwhile in itself. The focus of mission and dialogue was shifted from the Church to the Kingdom of God. The goal of mission was said to be the building up of the Kingdom and of the Church as its symbol and servant. Asian theologians developed a theology of harmony. St. John Paul II manifested a positive appreciation of other religions when he invited their leaders to come together to Assisi to pray for world peace in October 1986. Though they did not pray together, the fact that the other religious leaders were invited to pray was considered as offering their religions a certain legitimacy. He repeated the gesture in Bosnia and in Rome. In an encyclical meant to relaunch the Church's mission to the people, *The Mission of the Redeemer,* the Pope accepted that the Church can collaborate with the other religions in promoting gospel values.

2. Decreasing Interest in Dialogue

Two factors, however, need to be noted. The first one is quite ambiguous: the interest in interreligious dialogue has cooled down.

Dialogue groups have largely disappeared. Ashrams seem to be on the decline, once their founders were no longer on the scene. The younger priests and religious, not to speak of the people, are less interested. Coming from poorer sections of the people they are more interested in the theology of liberation. Some theologians exploring the theology of religions and dialogue have been pulled up by the central authority in the Church for not encouraging mission rather than dialogue and for seemingly downplaying the uniqueness of Christ as the only Saviour and the role of the Church as a means of salvation. Younger theologians seem to be in a mode of self-censorship. They seem more interested in liberating Dalits, Tribals and Women and also creation. Interest in interreligious dialogue and inculturation is waning on the whole.

The second factor is rather negative: though the Council spoke also about dialogue with the world indicating themes like the family, culture, economics, politics, peace, etc., in its document *The Church in the Modern World* nothing much has been spoken, written or done in these areas. In the early years there was at least some interest in social work for development and human promotion. The Indian Social Institutes in Delhi and Bangalore and Social Centres in other places seem less active in research, reflection, training and action. Various NGOs are active, but with a different atmosphere and interest. There is no dialogue with various socio-cultural movements and ideologies in view of social liberation and development. The documents speak of four types of dialogue: of life, of intellectual exchange, of spiritual experience and of common action. Small groups of people may engage in the first two. They have become activities of a few specialists, even professionals. I would have expected that at the level of common action the two kinds of dialogue, namely with the religions and the world, would have come together. I would have further expected that the dialogue with the world in view of action would have led us to dialogue not only with the religions, but also with ideologies, some of which may claim to be secular and agnostic, if not atheistic.

3. Dialogue with the World and the Role of Conscience

As we celebrate the 50 years after Vatican II, I would like to suggest that we should look more seriously into this dialogue with the world.

I think further that, without abandoning the dialogue of action with other religions, we should seek to dialogue also with secular ideologies. I would like to propose, thirdly, that such a dialogue with secular ideologies, and even with religious people, should be done on the basis of individual conscience. As a matter of fact, in two of its documents, namely that of *Religious Freedom* and *The Church in the Modern World*, the Council speaks about the dignity of every human, as human, in the world and the role of conscience and its freedom. I think that it is our challenge today to dialogue with every human, in view of building a cosmic human community, based on his/her conscience. While it is true that religious inspiration and energy can be very helpful animators in promoting collaboration in building a better world for all, religions may also be ambiguous. A spirit of fundamentalism may make a particular religious group look on other groups as enemies to be marginalized or overcome or even destroyed. Has not aggressive mission been a characteristic of some religions? Religious communalism makes the religions tools of a political agenda seeking to promote economic, social and political betterment for one's own group. While leaving the more open religious groups to do what they can, should we not focus on *conscience* as a factor that can unify all humans at a rational and human level? I would like to explore this in the following pages, starting precisely with what the Council has to say about conscience. Another reason to focus on conscience is that Pope Francis is actually doing it, though in a different context. He is helping us to rediscover the role of conscience in the lives of people.

4. Conscience Is Universal

In its *Declaration on Religious Liberty*, the Council affirms that every human person is endowed with human dignity which needs to be respected. An element of this dignity is freedom, especially in the area of religious practice. Each one is bound to seek the truth, but is free to do it in his/her own way (Nos 2-3). The state and civil society must respect and protect this freedom. Since the humans are not merely individuals but social beings they have the right to seek the truth as a community. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms in its very first Article: "All human beings are free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should

act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion" (Art 1). Let us note that the human right to freedom includes also freedom of thought, conscience and religion. These are different dimensions of one and the same freedom. The Declaration on Religious Liberty clarifies this.

> It is through his conscience that man sees and recognizes the demands of the divine law. He is bound to follow this conscience faithfully in all its activity so that he may come to God, who is his last end. Therefore he must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor must he be prevented from acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters (No. 3).

Conscience is therefore a universal gift given by God to all the humans as humans, irrespective of whatever religion or culture they may belong to. Through conscience the humans can discern God's law inscribed in each one's heart. This law is common to all the humans, prior to any religious affiliation.

The Pastoral Constitution on *The Church in the Modern World*, though it looks at the world from a Christian point of view, is addressed to all peoples with an expressed desire to dialogue and work with them in building up a more equal and just world (Nos. 1-3). It is in this context that the Council develops further this notion of conscience.

> Deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, tells him inwardly at the right moment: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God. His dignity lies in observing this law, and by it he will be judged (cf. Rom 2:15-16). His conscience is man's most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths (No. 16).

The deepest core of the humans is their conscience; there they are in touch with God. They may belong to different religions or may refuse to belong to any. But they cannot escape this moral sense of what is right and what is wrong, what they have to do and what they have to avoid. Conscience, as a matter of fact, has an interreligious

dimension. "Through loyalty to conscience Christians are joined to other men in the search for truth and for the right solution to so many moral problems which arise both in the life of individuals and from social relationships" (No. 16). The Council is aware that the intellectual nature of the humans "finds at last its perception, as it should, in wisdom, which gently draws the human mind to look for and to love what is true and good" (No. 15). The Bible has such wisdom books which do not belong strictly to the Jewish tradition, but to the wider human culture of the area. Similar wisdom literature in the form of aphorisms, proverbs, stories, etc., are found in all parts of the world. In India we have the *Panchatantra* stories and collection of aphorisms like the *Tirukkural*. They transcend the different religions. The Church affirms its readiness to collaborate even with atheists. "Although the Church altogether rejects atheism, she nevertheless sincerely proclaims that all men, those who believe as well as those who do not, should help to establish right order in this world where all live together. This certainly cannot be done without a dialogue that is sincere and prudent" (No. 21). In this context, it would be interesting to recall some of the areas in which the Church is calling us to dialogue and collaborate with all people of good will. Let me insist once again that, though the document does offer a Christian perspective to the issues evoked, it is only meant as a Christian contribution to a dialogue to which everyone, even the atheists, are invited. The Christian perspective is seen, for instance, when the idea of God's manifestation and action in the conscience of each one is replaced by the presence and action of the Holy Spirit conforming everyone to the paschal mystery of Christ. But by adding a phrase "in a way known to God," the priority of God beyond religions, so to speak, is safeguarded (No. 22). The document goes on to spell out the problems that the world is facing. Though it is addressed to all peoples, it is a document of the Church. So it speaks constantly at two levels. It evokes the problems and then adds a Christian perspective. In a dialogical context this should not be taken as the last word, but as a Christian proposal to which the others from their own religious or ideological point of view are expected to respond. Unfortunately this second step in dialogue is not often taken. What I would like to suggest is that before an interreligious encounter, a dialogue at a

secular, rational level, centred round conscience is possible and could be useful. In many places in Europe and elsewhere, where either the religions are rejected or interreligious tensions are very active, this may be the only kind of dialogue possible. So in the following pages I would like to focus on what the document *The Church in the Modern World* is saying about the problems in the world that need attention.

5. The Challenges of the World Today

The document starts with the evocation of "the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way" (No. 1). While the growth in wealth is evident, the gap between the rich and the poor is also increasing. Communications make possible a greater unity among people, but there are ethnic, economic, political and religious conflicts everywhere. Scientific advance is undeniable, but it seems to be used to control people rather than free them. The traditional social order seems to be breaking down, but widespread migrations and refugees bring in new social problems. Some young people seem more keen and active in religious practice, but secularization is also spreading. Tensions between theory and practice, between what is useful and what is ethical, between family and community demands and individual aspirations and needs, and between the generations in a fast changing world are increasing. Today we are also more sensitive to the need to protect creation from human exploitation. The human quest for meaning in life is becoming more complicated, but urgent.

While there is growing individualism, there is also a need to respect the equal dignity and rights of the persons, irrespective of their own personal gifts, achievements and social positions. At the same time we cannot ignore their dependence on the community. "In his fatherly care for all of us, God desired that all men should form one family and deal with each other in a spirit of brotherhood. All, in fact, are destined to the very same end, namely, God himself" (No. 24). We seek the "common good, which is the sum total of social condition which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily" (No. 26). Everyone is called to work towards this human and cosmic development, conscious

however that scientific and technological progress should be at the service of the humans as individuals and as community, promoting greater justice and brotherhood. There seems to be a fear that religions tend to be otherworldly and may be an obstacle to such human and cosmic development. God has created the world for the benefit of the humans and developing it in an appropriate way is God's will, provided the moral laws are respected (cf. No.35-36). The Document affirms that the Church is ready to collaborate with all human efforts to promote personal and community wellbeing provided they function within the limits of God's law. It also confesses that the Church itself "profits from the experience of past ages, from the progress of the sciences, and from the riches hidden in various cultures, through which greater light is thrown on the nature of man and new avenues to truth are opened up" (No. 44).

6. Some More Urgent Problems

In Part II, dealing with some more urgent problems, the document focuses on marriage and the family, culture, economic and social life, politics, the solidarity of peoples, and peace.

The family is a sort of basic community in society. It is in the family that a child grows, is socialized and learns basic human and moral values. But it seems to be in crisis today. Many young people, for whatever reason, just live together without committing themselves to a permanent relationship. Divorces are getting frequent. The family simply becomes a safe social framework in which each individual follows his/her own personal agenda. The wider families of former times which provided a secure social base are disappearing. Nuclear families, isolated in a busy world, seem to become the rule. An emerging issue is interreligious families with questions about the religious life of the couple and the bringing up of their children.

7. Culture(s)

Humans are born with many physical and intellectual endowments: physical strength and capacity to shape nature and their own bodies to humanize the world around them and to have a joyful and peaceful life; intelligence, imagination and artistic sense to create a world of

beauty; ways of reaching out to each other through language and poetry and build community; institutions to structure personal and community lives; a symbolic world that helps them to reach out to the transcendent. Through science the humans have discovered the secrets of the universe and have learnt to use them for their own benefit through appropriate technologies. The creativity of different groups of people, further diversified by local resources and factors like the weather, has resulted in the emergence of different cultures. Interactions between cultures through communications have led to mutual enrichment. People have become aware of their own capacities to shape their lives and build community. A focus on science and technology, while downplaying the arts may lead to a mechanization of life. Scientism may lead to secularization, emphasizing the instrumentalization of culture. The role of religion in culture would be to add depth to it in terms of values, perspectives and goals. Many religions animating one culture and many cultures socializing one religion may give rise to various tensions especially where religious fundamentalism and communalism may try to use culture for their own ends. But rising secular tendencies would be a counter balance.

8. Economics and Politics

Newer means of production and distribution have made it possible to meet the growing needs of the human community. At the same time the task of making money may tend to dominate life and inequality between the rich and the poor is growing. Technology seems to be preferred to agriculture and the service industries. What seems lacking is a mentality of sharing. Economic development must be at the service of the humans who control economic structures and processes. Automation should not be promoted at the expense of peoples' jobs. People should have the experience of working together for the economic betterment of all so that labour disputes may be avoided. Working conditions should be improved and some leisure should be assured for all. "God destined the earth and all it contains for all men and all peoples, so that all created things would be shared fairly by all mankind under the guidance of justice tempered by charity" (No. 69). Today we would add that the earth must not be destroyed by overexploitation, but must be saved for future generations. The Church

has always defended the right to private property as an expression of the dignity and freedom of individuals. But such a right is not absolute and the needs of the poor and the good of the community must also be balanced with it.

History has seen many political systems. However, there would be consensus today around a democratic set up, in which people have a sense of partnership and responsibility. The freedom and rights of everyone will be respected and the minorities of every kind—religious, ethnic, etc—will be protected. A variety of points of view could meet in an active discussion and lead to a consensus on which common action could be based. Basic moral principles should govern every exercise of authority. Democracy should be participative, while the state respects the autonomy of social institutions like the family and various associative groups.

9. Peace and Dialogue

We have had two world wars in the last century. Pope Francis has suggested that a third world war seems to be going on, but in a scattered and piecemeal fashion. Forced migrations of whole populations have become a global problem; a recent estimate puts it at more than 60 million people. Terrorist groups and their attacks seem to be multiplying. The many local wars are supported by a flourishing global arms trade which is making money out of the blood of the suffering poor, especially women and children. A recent seminar in Rome has questioned the legality today of the just war theory, given the indiscriminate and destructive nature of the modern war.

While everyone is speaking of globalization of communications and commerce, gross inequalities of wealth and power between nations continue. Global organizations like the United Nations are controlled by the rich and militarily powerful nations. Cooperation in the economic and political sphere to promote justice and community is certainly a must. Cooperation demands dialogue. The Church is ready to dialogue with everyone.

> For our part, our eagerness for such dialogue, conducted with appropriate discretion and leading to truth by way of love alone,

> exclude nobody; we would like to include those who respect outstanding human values without realizing who the author of values is, as well as those who oppose the Church and persecute it in various ways. Since God the Father is the beginning and end of all things, we are all called to be brothers; we ought to work together without violence and without deceit to build up the world in a spirit of genuine peace (No. 92).

10. Pope Francis and Conscience

The role of conscience is being highlighted in the pastoral ministry of Pope Francis. Before him moral principles were spelt out in absolute terms. The experts, of course, knew that they could be interpreted according to the circumstances, personal disposition and intention, etc., at least in particular cases. But this was not stressed very much in practice. When religions dialogue with each other it tends to be an encounter of absolutes. They talk about general principles, not about concrete cases. But when two religious groups are dialoguing, not about doctrine or principles, but about action to transform society involving concrete practical decisions, interpretation will be involved. It is at that stage that individuals and their consciences are confronted with decision making. At these moments the pastoral praxis of Pope Francis becomes very helpful. In one of his interviews aboard a plane when someone asked him about homosexual persons, he did not simply repeat the classical doctrine that homosexuality is an intrinsic disorder, but simply asked a counter question: "Whom am I to judge?" For an observer, it may simply be a theoretical moral question; but for the person concerned and his/her family it is a personal, practical question. In that context an abstract *a priori* answer is not enough. One will have to take into account the person concerned, the circumstances, etc. One could even say that the matter must eventually be left to the person's conscience, after one has clarified the principles. In the same way, when someone asked about the *Zika* virus he answered that one would be justified in taking appropriate action to prevent being infected with the deadly virus.

The question came much more strongly during the synods on the family. The context was the possible admission to communion of Christians

divorced and remarried. The strictly legal answer is 'No.' But this does not take into account the personal culpability and responsibility of the individuals concerned. Under particular circumstances, a person on whom a divorce is forced—often a helpless woman—may not be guilty at all, but an unwilling victim. Trying to survive and support a child that person may seek the help of another partner. Thus the actual living situation may have changed. Under such circumstances a person who is divorced and remarried may feel that s/he is not living in a state of sin and therefore can go to communion. This has obviously to be discerned in every individual case. The discernment has to be made by the person concerned according to his/her conscience, of course aided by an informed and responsible guide.[1] But, as Pope Francis remarks: "We have been called to form consciences, not to replace them."[2] Forming consciences would involve, not only teaching them general principles, but also training them to discern decisions in particular given circumstances. But in a concrete situation this discernment is that of the person concerned, not of the guide. I do not wish to elaborate this point except to say that conscience does not simply repeat absolute principles beyond discussion, but explores concrete contingent decisions in particular circumstances for particular people. At this level one can engage in a practical dialogue oriented towards doing something together towards the transformation of society.

11. Conclusion: Dialogue and Conscience

We have to respect the many ashramites who seek to live an Indian (Hindu) Christian Spirituality. There are also people like Raimon Panikkar, Swami Abhishiktananda and others who may even speak of double religious belonging. Such ways of interreligious dialogue have their place. But in the context of what we have been discussing above I would suggest that the focus of dialogue between religious groups should be primarily not theology or spirituality but praxis. We should try to reach a consensus for action based on the promptings of

1 It is not necessary to enter into this problem elaborately here. Those interested can consult the Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia,* Chapter 8, Nos. 291-312. I am only highlighting the importance that Pope Francis is giving to the role of conscience.

2 *Amoris Laetitia,* No. 37.

conscience, which will be a more neutral ground than religious faith or ideology. There is no problem for a person or a group to be inspired also by his/her ideology or religious faith. But the choice for action must also be defensible by reason in the context of a multi-religious community.

At the level of the Christian community in Asia the context and goal of dialogue today is being spelt out in terms of the Kingdom, and not of the Church. The Kingdom, while it has its religious backing, is also a secular ideal, as a community of freedom, fellowship and justice, that will appeal to people of all religions. When someone asked Jesus about the greatest commandment of the law, Jesus answered that it is to love the Lord God and to love the other as oneself. But on the last day of his life when he is taking leave of the disciples the 'new commandment' he gives is simplified: "Love one another as I have loved you." God has not disappeared. But God is experienced and loved in the other. This was illustrated by Jesus when he described the final judgment. The Lord blesses those who clothed him, fed him, visited him in prison, etc. When the people express their surprise, his explanation is simple: "Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). He identifies himself with the needy, suffering brothers and sisters. Loving the other becomes an ethical imperative. The Lord is encountered in the other. The Sacred has become the secular. At this level we can dialogue and collaborate, not only with other religious believers, but with all people of good will. We can appeal to conscience as a common ground for our conversations and action plans.

So far we have been dialoguing with other religious believers, especially the experts among them. People also seem to be ready to make an occasional public show of mutual friendship. I do not think that much headway is being made. It may be more interesting to promote among students a true knowledge of other religions and a spirit of collaboration in view of promoting community, leaving theological and spiritual encounter to the few who are really interested, qualified and initiated. At both levels it may be helpful to focus on a free, equal and just community (Kingdom), based on conscience and open to all people of good will.

MAKING ONESELF AT HOME
Journeying with Gandhi towards an Inclusive Society

Nishant A. Irudayadason

"Poverty is the worst form of Violence"

"The world has enough for everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed."

Mohandas K. Gandhi

Abstract: *This paper is inspired by two of the well-known dicta of Gandhi: "Poverty is the worst form of oppression," and "the world has enough for the need for all but not for the greed of all." In a world that is driven by relentless profit-making and competing market economy that have paved for liberal economy and neo-globalization, the poor are pushed to the periphery. So much violence is done to the disadvantaged including the economically poor, women, farmers, daily labourers, untouchables, etc. India which prides itself to call Gandhi, the Father of our Nation seems to have forgotten the ideals he cherished and propagated. Rather than deploring the exclusion of many ordinary people from the fabric of society, we need to positively revisit Gandhi's philosophy in order to appropriate certain values to be inculcated to create an inclusive society making it a home for all. The urgency of addressing the issue of social exclusion of millions of Indians saddles us with the responsibility of journeying with Gandhi in re-articulating his vision of 'social home' inclusive of people of all strata, status and social standing without discrimination.*

This paper is an attempt to respond to the pressing need of the hour. This paper divided into four parts aims at retrieving Gandhi's vision of inclusiveness in labour, economy, politics and praxis. It also tries to show the consistency between Gandhi's words and deeds in his vision of inclusiveness. A trace of the bond between social justice and ecological justice is offered but not fully developed.

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1. Introduction

We know the stakes and urgency of finding solutions to the serious problems in our societies and our world: poverty and malnutrition affect many countries; unemployment and exclusion are rampant everywhere; environmental pollution (the rivers, sea, land, air), destruction of ecosystems, serious threats to biodiversity, depletion of natural resources (fisheries, forests, aquifers groundwater, minerals, fossil fuels), and global warming threaten the survival of humanity. The proliferation of nuclear weapons could be catastrophic in the context of increasing regional conflicts. Racist ideologies, xenophobia and fear of others mislead both the disoriented populations and the power-crazy leaders. The illusion of omnipotence and excess of *homo sapiens*, his alienation from nature, spirituality and even common sense, all these factors contribute to uncontrolled use of technology purely for economic gain. The economic neo-colonialism, particularly evident in the current ultra-liberalism and economic globalization, has imposed a model that endangers agriculture and food security.

Farmers get suffocated by the liberal economy that imposes a cultural model leading to unwanted consequences: endless race for material goods, exacerbated competition in all areas of life including education and employment, denial of the reality of old age and death, etc. The 'elites' and even the so-called 'underdeveloped' are tempted by the mirages of affluent Western societies, which nevertheless make them prey to despair and psychotropic drugs.

In the competitive and individualistic society of ours, human person is considered responsible only for his/her situation. Any help from others is perceived as a risk preventing one from assuming responsibility for

his/her situation. This is the paradox of our society: on the one hand, it presents itself as the champion of social protection while on the other hand it accentuates the marginalization of those whom it is supposed to protect.

All these phenomena are related to the fundamental issue of the 'struggle for social recognition' of those living in precarious conditions. Axel Honneth, sociologist and German philosopher, who introduced the idea of the 'threat of the Society of contempt,' argues that the current capitalist society grows contempt for all those 'losers' in terms of success criteria. According to him, this contempt is the result of a denial of 'social recognition' and directly threatens the confidence and self-esteem of those who are victims.[1] We are at a crucial time when we might suffer a huge crisis if a large part of our planet does not radically change its lifestyles, production, consumption, trade, conflict resolution. In such times, it is necessary to draw inspiration from some perennial sources, and to resort to persons who have worked to elevate humanity. Gandhi is one such important figure in history whose social thought and praxis can help us not to get lost in the depth of stupidity, selfishness, hatred and violence.

2. Inclusiveness in Attributing Value to All Kinds of Labour

During a train trip in South Africa, Gandhi discovers the ideas of the British writer and artist John Ruskin (1819-1900) from his book *Unto This Last* (the title is taken from Jesus' parable of the workers of the last hour). During his first stay in the British prison in South Africa, Gandhi began translating *Unto This Last* into Gujarati, his native language, under the title *Sarvodaya*,[2] meaning 'Universal Uplift.' He

1 See Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).

2 *Sarvodaya* is a generic name given to the non-violent social order which Gandhi aimed at. *Sarvodaya* stands for the emancipation, the uplift and elevation of all, and that all living beings are participants in or portions (*amsa*) of a super material reality. Hence the food of all living beings which necessarily implies the good of all humanity has to be positively fostered. He repudiates, therefore, the limited gospel of the greatest good of the greatest number.

regretted that his sentence in prison was too short to complete his work.

Gandhi listed three main lessons that he received from Ruskin's book, *Unto This Last*.

(i) That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.

(ii) That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.

(iii) That a life of labour, i.e. the life of tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman, is the life worth living.[3]

Gandhi discovered in *Unto This Last* much of his economic and social theories. In his cry of anger against injustice and inhumanity, Ruskin denounces capitalism destroying the social fabric and creating poverty, and underscores that the scourge ravaging society is the moral deficit in economy. He seeks to offer a different type of technology, based not only on rationality, but also on the spiritual aspect: What holds true for Science and Technology also holds true for economics and politics. Ruskin redefines wealth: it is life itself and not silver or gold, it is not found in the possession of material goods, but in the heart of noble and generous individuals. The worst loss is the stifling of human creativity by oppressive tasks devoted to the accumulation of money instead of turning towards social and aesthetic purposes. The relationship between an employer and his/her employee is primarily a question of justice, and must be experienced in the recognition of the need and mutual responsibility. Unfair wage is a kind of theft. Honour in trade relations is not only desirable, but essential for true prosperity. Ruskin believes that the division of labour and specialization as a form of slavery, he says that the answer to the ills of industrial society is to encourage cooperation rather than competition. In the words of Gandhi, "capital and labour should supplement and help each other. They should be a great family living in unity and harmony, capital not only looking to the material welfare of the labourers but their moral

3 M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1941), part IV, chapter xviii.

welfare also capitalists being trustees for the welfare of the labouring classes under them."

In his book *Small Is Beautiful* published in 1973, the British economist Ernst Fritz Schumacher holds that, "if human vices such as greed and envy are systematically cultivated, the result will not be less than the collapse of intelligence."[4] Gandhi was of the definite opinion that property was trust. He divided property in two parts; gifts of nature and the product of social living. The gifts of nature include land, mines, natural resources, etc. The second part deals with the man-made property. He believed that all forms of property and human accomplishments were either the gift of nature or the product of social living. As such they belong not to the individual but to the society and therefore should be used for the good of all. Everything belongs to God and was from God, and therefore, it was for His people and not for a particular individual. When an individual had more than his proportionate portion, he becomes the trustee of that portion of God's people. "Supposing I have come by a fair amount of wealth—either by way of legacy, or by the means of trade and industry—I must know that all my wealth does not belong to me; and what belongs to me is the right of an honourable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others. The rest of my wealth belongs to the community and must be used for the welfare of the community."[5]

Gandhi was far from being hostile to science; in fact he admired the methods of science that he sought to make use of them in his life and action. He did not criticize science itself, but its use or more precisely its abuse by the so-called modern industrial civilization. However, Gandhi was not opposed to technology, rather he welcomed it especially when it eases human labour, and he was very appreciative of bicycle and the Singer sewing machine. But he advocated small machines that can be used by the largest number rather than larger machines used for mass production. He was very critical towards heavy industry. He believed that the ultimate solution for fighting poverty in India was not mass production but production by the masses, that is to say,

4 Ernst Fritz Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful* (London: Blond & Briggs, 1973), 31.
5 M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan Sevak*, June 3, 1939.

to provide work for all in small agricultural or industrial businesses, limiting and controlling the use of machinery. By adopting the principle of production by the masses, village communities would be able to restore dignity to the work done by human hands. There is an intrinsic value in anything we do with our hands, and in handing over work to machines we lose not only the material benefits but also the spiritual benefits, for work by hand brings with it a meditative mind and self-fulfilment. Gandhi wrote,

It's a tragedy of the first magnitude that millions of people have ceased to use their hands as hands. Nature has bestowed upon us this great gift which is our hands. If the craze for machinery methods continues, it is highly likely that a time will come when we shall be so incapacitated and weak that we shall begin to curse ourselves for having forgotten the use of the living machines given to us by God. Millions cannot keep fit by games and athletics and why should they exchange the useful productive hardy occupations for the useless, unproductive and expensive sports and games.[6]

The Gandhian plan for economic development proposed in 1944 was part of modern industrialization, but the Congress retained the 'Bombay Plan' drafted by a group of industrialists supported by Nehru.

3. Swadeshi: Principle of Inclusive Economy

The thought of Gilbert Keith Chesterton, an English Catholic writer (1874-1936), also influenced Gandhi in his writing of *Hind Swaraj*. Gandhi was stunned by reading an article of Chesterton in the newspaper *The Illustrated London News* of September 18, 1909. Devoted to Indian nationalism, this column challenged Gandhi for not being enough Indian, but imbued with the spirit of modernity and in particular the Liberal ideology of Herbert Spencer that supported social 'selection of the fittest.' Hence the question of Chesterton: what is the strength of the Indian national spirit if it cannot protect the Indians against the ideas of Spencer? In an article in the newspaper

6 Cited by Satish Kumar, *You Are, Therefore I am: A Declaration of Dependence* (Cambridge: Green Books, 2002), 133.

Indian Opinion of 8 January 1910, Gandhi accepted that Chesterton's assertion is right, and invited his fellow Indians to introspect their loyalty to their indigenous traditions.

In India, people have lived for thousands of years in relative harmony with their surroundings: living in their homesteads, weaving homespun clothes, eating home-grown food, using homemade goods; caring for their animals, forests, and lands; celebrating the fertility of the soil with feasts; performing the stories of great epics, and building temples. Every region of India has developed its own distinctive culture, to which travelling storytellers, wandering sages and constantly flowing streams of pilgrims have traditionally made their contribution.

Every village community of free India should have its own carpenters, shoemakers, potters, builders, mechanics, farmers, engineers, weavers, teachers, bankers, merchants, traders, musicians, artists, and priests. In other words, each village should be a microcosm of India—a web of loosely inter-connected communities. Gandhi considered these villages so important that he thought they should be given the status of 'village republics.' The village must build a strong economic base to satisfy most of its needs, and all members of the village community should give priority to local goods and services. Whatever is made or produced in the village must be used first and foremost by the members of the village. Trading among villages and between villages and towns should be minimal, like icing on the cake. Goods and services that cannot be generated within the community can be bought from elsewhere. Gandhi called this principle of economy '*swadeshi*.'

Swadeshi avoids economic dependence on external market forces that could make the village community vulnerable. It also avoids unnecessary, unhealthy, wasteful, and therefore environmentally destructive transportation. For Gandhi, the spirit and the soul of India rested in the village communities. He said, "The true India is to be found not in its few cities, but in its seven hundred thousand villages. If the villages perish, India will perish too." The village community should embody the spirit of the home—an extension of the family rather than a collection of competing individuals. Gandhi's dream was

not of personal self-sufficiency, not even family self-sufficiency, but the self-sufficiency of the village community.[7]

4. Non-Violent Civil Disobedience: Paradigm of Inclusive Politics

Gandhi also owes much to Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910). Tolstoy denounced the Christian churches for making compromises with war and death penalty, preached refusal to serve bad governments or to obey them, recommended the refusal of military service where one learns to kill. After reading Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is within You*, Gandhi noted that "Russia gave me in Tolstoy a teacher who furnished a reasoned basis for my nonviolence."[8] Their amazing and moving correspondence began with a letter written by the young Indian lawyer from London on 1 October 1909 to the Russian writer to expose the injustice suffered by Indians in Tansvaal following the introduction of an unfair and discriminatory law. In his second letter to Gandhi, dated 8 May 1910, Tolstoy told him the interest with which he had read his book *Indian Home Rule*. The last letter of Tolstoy dated 7 September 1910, two months before his death, was his legacy concerning nonviolence.

Gandhi sees nonviolence as a powerful political means to defend democracy and international peace. His ideas are very pertinent today in the international context of extreme violence that we experience. "My nation of democracy is that under it the weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest. That can never happen except through non-violence."[9] Nonviolence involves total noncompliance with the logic of coercion, ruling out both a violent and passive response. Nonviolence is the active noncompliance with injustice while concurrently creating a positive alternative; it rejects both indignity and dependence in favour of dignity, self-sufficiency and interdependence for all parties involved. "It is my firm conviction,"

7 See Satish Kumar, "Gandhi's Swadeshi: The Economics of Permanence," http://caravan.squat.net/ICC-en/Krrs-en/ghandi-econ-en.htm (accessed on June 20, 2016).

8 D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma* vol. 6 (Bombay: Vitthalbhai K. Javeri & Tendulkar, 1953), 177.

9 Tendulkar, *Mahatma* vol. 5, 343.

Gandhi affirmed, "that nothing enduring can be built upon violence." The rate of social change through the nonviolent technique was not in fact likely to be much slower than that achieved by violent methods; it was definitely faster than that expected from the normal functioning of institutions which tended to fossilize and preserve the status quo.

Gandhi used his non-violent technique on behalf of his fellow-countrymen in South Africa and India, but he did not conceive it only as a weapon in the armoury of Indian nationalism. On the other hand, he fashioned it as an instrument for righting wrongs and resolving conflicts between opposing groups, races and nations. It is a strange paradox that though the stoutest and perhaps the most successful champion of the revolt against colonialism in our time, Gandhi was free from the taint of narrow nationalism. As early as 1924, he had declared that "the better mind of the world desires today, not absolutely independent states, warring one against another, but a federation of independent, of friendly interdependent states."

The American Henry David Thoreau (1817-62) is also a mentor of Gandhi. The latter, during one of his numerous stays in British prisons, borrowed from the library the book *Civil Disobedience* (1849), in which the idea Thoreau argues in favour of resistance against a government deemed unjust. Gandhi said that this text was masterful and had made on him a lasting impression. He often quoted passage in which Thoreau talks about his time in prison:

> I did nor[sic] for a moment feel confined, and the walls seemed a great waste of stone and mortar. I felt as if I alone of all my townsmen had paid my tax. They plainly did not know how to treat me, but behaved like persons who are underbred. In every threat and in every compliment there was a blunder; for they thought that my chief desire was to stand the other side of that stone wall. I could not but smile to see how industriously they locked the door on my meditations, which followed them out again without let or hindrance, and they were really all that was dangerous. As they could not reach me, they had resolved to punish my body; just as boys, if they cannot come at some person against whom they have a spite, will abuse his dog. I saw that the State was half-witted, that it was timid as a lone woman with

> her silver spoons, and that it did not know its friends from its foes, and I lost all my remaining respect for it, and pitied it.[10]

Gandhi wholeheartedly agreed with Thoreau. He served two additional three-month in South Africa in the campaign against the Black Law. With both women and men willing to face imprisonment, this movement succeeded. Legislation was modified and compromises were reached. According to Gandhi, complete civil disobedience implying a refusal to render obedience to every single state-made law can be a very powerful movement. It can become more dangerous than an armed rebellion; because the stupendous power of innocent suffering undergone on a great scale has potency. By bringing the scrutinizing glare of public opinion on the evils of an autocratic state, the fall even of a despotic political regime is ensured. Essentially Gandhi was a moral prophet who had declared his unequivocal resistance to all concentrations of power, force and violence. The influence of the individualistic spirit of the old *Sannyasi* and the *Bhikshu* tradition of India combined with the protestant individualism of Thoreau and the radical anti-static of Tolstoy was too pronounced in Gandhi.[11]

5. The Inclusive Nature of the Praxis of Gandhi

Some traits may characterize Gandhi's philosophy as a philosophy in action, that is to say, seeking wisdom for the right action. What is fascinating about Gandhi is his pragmatic approach: he submitted his intuitions, reflections and convictions to continuous introspection. He never made a dogma out of his well-cherished notion of nonviolence.

> Ahimsa with me is a creed, the breath of life. But it is never as a creed that I placed it before India or, for that matter, before anyone except in casual or informal talks. I placed it before the Congress as a political weapon, to be employed for the solution of political problems. It is a new experiment in ahimsa which I have undertaken. As far as I am aware, no one has hitherto employed ahimsa in the political arena

10 Henry David Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience and Other Essays* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1993), 12.

11 See R. Choudhurie, "Gandhian Philosophy of Satyagraha," http://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/ramanand.htm (accessed on June 20, 2016).

> in this manner. If someone has, at least I am not aware of it. Maybe it is a novel method, but it does not on that account lose its political character.[12]

He writes that nonviolent methods that he adopted "were the work of an essentially practical man dealing with practical political questions."[13] The ultimate goal of the resistance movement he organized was not so much to take away the power of the British as to organize the power of the Indians. Gandhi was a vegetarian for ethical reasons; protecting the cow for him is symptomatic of all life, especially the weak, but he also considered the economic dimension, because the meat was (is still) more expensive compared to cereals, vegetables and fruits, and thus rendered service to Indians who had low income.

Upon his return to India in 1915 after 21 years in South Africa, Gandhi discovered that he did not know his country well enough and then decided to go from village to village to meet the 'soul' of India amidst the rural masses to know their real needs. The resistance of Gandhi to situations of injustice was organized precisely as a response to the needs of the people. Gandhi felt challenged by the needs and the demands of the people early in his political life in India: he organized the resistance of small groups such as indigo planters in Bihar against the abuses of British owners, farmers' strike against the income tax of Bombay when the region was badly affected by drought, and factory workers in Ahmadabad against those who monopolised textile industry, rural masses against the repressive Rowlatt Act, etc.

Gandhi confronted humiliation generating systems, injustice and dependency, but respected all people. He was proud to have among his best friends the English, while fighting fervently against the mighty British colonialism. He also challenged thought patterns and ideologies that prevented the Indians from standing up against injustice. What made the British imperialism in India powerful was not primarily the ability of the British to subjugate Indians, but the facility with which Indians submitted themselves to the colonial rule: "It is not so much British guns that are responsible for our subjection

12 M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan Sevak*, January 25, 1942.
13 M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan Sevak*, January 25, 1942.

as our voluntary cooperation."[14] He invited the Indians to get out of their inferiority complex that has led to them to accept humiliation and domination. The Indians began to alienate themselves from their own roots as they admired the British culture more than their own. He was aware that the independence of India could be only a partial success if the scourges that affect Indian society such as unemployment, lack of hygiene, alcohol, caste system, untouchability, child marriage, and superstitions especially religious fanaticism are not combated.

To avoid being big-headed and to stay in touch with everyday reality of life, Gandhi participated in handicrafts ashram, spinning textiles, cleaning of washrooms—work normally assigned to people of lower castes. After the 'salt march' organized to abolish the British tax on salt, he said in his message to the nation on April 9, 1930: "At present India's self-respect, in fact her all, is symbolized as it were in a handful of salt in the Satyagrahi's hand. Let the first holding it, therefore, be broken, but let there be no voluntary surrender of the salt."[15] He spent six years of his life in prison for disobeying laws that he denounced as unfair and unjust. Like many other persons in search of justice and truth in the story, he was murdered by a member of a fanatical group.

Gandhi defines and implements the principle of consistency between means and ends. It is in *Hind Swaraj* that Gandhi affirms the principle of consistency between the end and the means: "The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree."[16] Unlike Tolstoy for whom nonviolence was an end, Gandhi considered it a means, but a means inseparable from the end, a means by which the end can be sought here and now. The end belongs to the order of intention; only the means belongs to the order of action. The end refers to the future; only the means is concerned with the present.

14 M. K. Gandhi, *The Essential Gandhi: An Anthology of His Writings on His Life, Work and Ideas*, ed. Luois Fischer (New York: Random House, 1962), 166.

15 Cited by Bob Blaisdell, *Essays on Civil Disobedience* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2016), 116.

16 M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1944), 115.

Gandhi demonstrated political realism. He was aware that the pressure was to be exerted when social and political efforts became ineffective. "Conviction or no conviction," he wrote on March 2, 1930 to Lord Irwin announcing plans for salt Satyagraha, "Great Britain would defend her Indian commerce and interest by all the forces at her command. India must consequently evolve force enough to free herself from that embrace of death."[17] With reference to the independence of India from the British rule, the salt march had a clear and precise objective: the abolition of the law of tax on salt. The praxis of Gandhi was based on the autonomy of individuals and communities. He believed that the development of cities alone cannot afford a non-violent way of life in the Independent India: only the consolidation of economic autonomy and village politics could, in his view, contribute to building a non-violent society. "Real Swaraj," he said "will come, not by the acquisition of the authority by a few, but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. Swaraj is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority."[18]

Gandhi gives priority to the poorest of the poor. While the dominated poor were tendentiously excluded from the public sphere, Gandhi sought to place them at the centre so that they would be recognized, affirmed and honoured. The famous recommendation of Gandhi is a good benchmark to guide our action:

> I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man [woman] whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him [her]. Will he [she] gain anything by it? Will it restore him [her] to a control over his [her] own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj [freedom] for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and yourself melt away.[19]

17 M. K. Gandhi, "First Letter to Lord Irwin," in *Mahatma Gandhi: Selected Political Writings*, ed. Dennis Dalton (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1996), 77.

18 M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, January 29, 1925, 41.

19 Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase*, Vol II (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1958), 65.

Gandhi was genius to have made the right choice of symbols and correct mode of communication. Wearing Indian apparel, use of khadi and the spinning wheel are symbols of boycotting British textiles industry. The spinning wheel symbol in particular was so impactful that it was adopted by the then National congress as its symbol. All Indians—rich or poor, male or female—were given appeal to work on a daily basis to help India obtain freedom. Every strategy of Gandhi instilled discipline and commitment; it also provided space for women to be actively involved in the freedom struggle. The choice to act against tax on salt was formidable because this action was both combative and simple for millions of poor Indians. On the occasion of the 'Salt March,' Gandhi invited the international press to witness his non-violent action and repression that would befall his resistance.

Gandhi speaks very highly of women: "If by strength is meant brute strength, then, indeed, is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior. Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater courage? Without her man could not be. If non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with woman… Who can make a more effective appeal to the heart than woman?"[20]

Gandhi was conscious of the bond between personal transformation and social change. As a person of depth and profound interiority, he spent one day in a week in silence. He communicated those days with others by writing on a piece of paper. He believed that refraining from speaking brought him inner peace. During three and a half years, at the age of 37, he refused to read newspapers, claiming that the tumultuous new world caused him more confusion than his own inner turmoil. But unlike Tolstoy who retained only the interior action aimed at changing himself, Gandhi also believed in collective political action that aimed at changing the society. Both individual transformation and collective social change, according to him, are inseparable: "You must be the change you wish to see in the world."[21] From this optic, for Gandhi

20 M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, April 10, 1930, 121.

21 There is "no reliable documentary evidence for the quotation," according to an article in *The New York Times* dated August 29, 2011. It is not found as a direct quotation from Gandhi in the 98-volume authorized *Collected Works of Mahatma*

education has a three-fold purpose: self-sufficiency for everyone in terms of material needs, personal aptitude for knowledge and the development of the ability to think independently, and self-mastery, that is ability to recognize one's own emotions without letting them invade oneself and to decide how to handle them in a specific context.

6. Conclusion

Revisiting Gandhi's philosophy of inclusiveness, inviting people of all walks of like to be at home, becomes the need of the hour for many reasons. The emergence of a narrow understanding of nationalism which is constructed to ensure exclusion of some people, the widening gap between the rich and poor, thanks to crony capitalism, the unprecedented crisis suffered by poor farmers due to lack of proper focus in the priority setting of the so called development agenda, unbridled corporates who have easy access to grab land resulting in displacement of many people and forceful eviction of many from their land, the only source of earning a living—all these make us wonder if we actually live in the land of the well-renowned leader who is hailed as the Father of our Nation.

The present day India journeys through many social struggles and the breather comes only from the fact that there is a real activist community trying to reinvent Gandhi's vision of social inclusiveness and to engage in the dynamic rejection of neoliberal globalization. The social activism of intellectual women activists such Vandana Shiva, Arundhati Roy, Medha Patkar and Aruna Roy lies at the heart of the life of the poor peasantry in India. These committed women, each in her own unique way, appropriates Gandhi's social philosophy of

Gandhi. The earliest evidence for quotes of this type comes from the "Love Project," an initiative that began in 1970 in a high school in Brooklyn, New York by teacher Arleen Lorrance. According to the project's website, "Be the change you want to see happen, instead of trying to change anyone else" was one the principles of the Project "received" by Lorrance in 1970; but contemporaneous evidence for this has not been found. In 1974, Lorrance wrote, in a report on the Project: "One way to start a preventative program is to be the change you want to see happen." See "The Love Project," in *Developing Priorities and a Style*, ed., Kellough (MSS, 1974). In 1987 a similar quote was attributed to Gandhi in a New Mexico newspaper: "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." See https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Mahatma_Gandhi.

inclusiveness addresses issues of multiple dimensions of life in villages and communities, from the sacred to politics and from the imaginary to science. Taking inspiration from Gandhi and in collaboration with many such intellectual activists, let us begin our journey at the heart of our commercial civilization and decolonization of the imaginary, to inaugurate the exit process of liberal capitalism and thus initiate, together with the world civilizations, new relationships based on social and ecological justice.

Part - VI

Fostering Our Cosmic Home

COSMOS as Our Home

ENVIRONMENT
Past, Present and Future

S. Ignacimuthu, sj

Abstract: *Environment is all that surrounds us. It consists of both living and non-living components. There is an inter-connectedness between them implying an integration. The earth is the garden planet of the Universe sustaining life in various forms. Once human beings arrived on the earth, they started domestication and developed technologies. Great civilizations arose. Unfortunately developmental processes became a threat to life on earth. There is depletion of resources, loss of biodiversity, pollution, deforestation, desertification, shrinking of ozone layer, erosion of soil, climate change and global warming. Environmental destruction threatens the world with unprecedented sufferings. Because of our greed we have caused these problems. We have to take serious steps to protect our environment. We are called to rediscover our roots and our inter-dependence in the cosmos. We need to realize that the human community must now become aware of how crucial its behavior is for the well-being of life on earth.*

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Introduction[1]

Today people in general are quite aware that a good and beautiful environment is very important for a happy and healthy life. The environment consists of both the living and the non-living

1 I am immensely happy to contribute this article for this special volume of *Festschrift* in honor of Prof. Pushparajan, a good human being and a great philosophy teacher. I have been associated with him for several years and have always admired his versatile personality. His love for environment promoted me to write this article.

components. Soil, water, air, light, energy, gravity, humidity, temperature, magnetism, matter, etc. constitute the non-living components. All kinds of living forms from microbes to human beings with their various colors, shapes, sizes and stature constitute the living component. There is a constant interrelationship between the living and the non-living components of the environment. The living components create a relationship with the non-living components by interacting for mutual benefit of each other. Due to this interaction, there is a flow of energy and exchange of materials establishing a close unity, a web of life.[2]

All life ultimately is interconnected. There is a multitude of relationships, a network of life, by which different parts of God's creation interact and flourish. We might express this kind of connection in terms of an order in God's creation through which environment operates consistently according to environmental laws. These laws make life possible by, for example, allowing for the regulations of cycles of food, water and carbon, and maintaining adequate stability within and between ecosystems. Indeed many of the early environmentalists sought to find the hand of God in environment through which they could explain this order and harmony within creation.[3]

The significance of interdependence within environment has led to the concept of the integrity of creation. If even a small fraction of the environment is abused there is a sense in which the whole of creation suffers. Our impact on the environment is strongly affected by how we view our earthly home. In other words, how we perceive the environment around us will influence how we treat it.

Hence in what follows, let us briefly analyze the environment in its past, present and future, with a view to promote environmental justice.

1. The Past

The earth is the garden planet of the universe. As far as we know it is the only planet that can support life and it does so in

2 S. Ignacimuthu, *Environmental Studies* (Chennai: M.J.P. Publishers, 2012), 1-262.

3 www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/history/linnaeus.html

extraordinary fashion, abundance and variety. It does not support life from its own resources alone. The earth took shape at just the right distance from the sun, close enough for the sun's heat and energy to make conditions suitable for life, and yet not so close as to destroy everything, as happened in the case of Mercury and Venus.

Some scientists estimate that the earth came into being about 4.6 billion years ago. Originally it was cold. However, the interior began to heat up under gravitational pressures. These pressures were not great enough to light a nuclear core, as happened in the stars. Rather the increased temperature and pressures led to the formation of a molten nickel and iron core.

In this way the planet earth began to take on a stratified shape during its early evolution. Heavy metals sank to the centre and lighter metals rose to the top. This top layer, the earth's crust, is a relatively thin skin of rock with lighter metals riding on the mantle below. Many geologists today believe that the crust is made up of a number of plates which drift apart and collide, thrusting up mountains like the Andes in Latin America and the Himalayas in Asia. Beneath the crust is the mantle comprising most of the volume of the earth and extending from 25 or 30 to 2000 kilometres. Below the mantle is the core.

The earth is not sedate today, and certainly was not so in its infancy. Numerous rings of volcanoes all around the earth continually released gases and magma to create the atmosphere and the oceans over millions of years. The stabilization of the oceans was a significant milestone in the history of the planet earth, as the oceans are both the birthplace and the early cradle for life on the planet.[4]

The emergence of a free-oxygen atmosphere is also vital for any higher life form. The original atmosphere was dominated by carbon monoxide. This was burned off by the increase both in the heat from the core and the sun's heat. The formation of a new atmosphere began as the earth cooled. Volcanoes continued to emit gases and vapour in

4 Simon Singh, *Big Bang: The Origin of the Universe*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2005).

the form of hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen and oxygen. In the cooling process, hydrogen combined with oxygen to form water.

All the chemical elements that compose living matter were present in the liquid-mixture of the primordial oceans. How the inert mixture underwent the numerous chemical reactions to produce the first organic molecule is not yet clear. The process probably involved considerable electric energy from cosmic radiation. Once the living molecule was able to reproduce itself, life on earth was possible.[5] The small marine microorganisms which emerged in the ocean played an important role in releasing oxygen into the air; yet to reproduce and propagate they began to feed on the original ocean soup, so that it seemed life would be snuffed out in its very beginning. But once again the creativities deep within the earth responded and the important process of photosynthesis, the use of solar energy to transform non-living matter into living tissue and the regulation of the oxygen content of the air, began.

The early plants and their descendants have made sure that the oxygen in the air is maintained by photosynthesis at around 21 per cent. Without photosynthesis, animals and human beings would lack the capacity to transform non-living things into chemical energy and this would lead to survival problems. Photosynthesis was a step in the process which would in time lead to lung-breathing creatures who would emerge from the oceans to walk on the earth or fly through the air. Photosynthesis is also essential for the maintenance of the biosphere, as it shows organic life to transform inanimate matter and use it to reproduce cells.

Life became steadily more complex, more varied and more ingenious. More and more complex forms began to evolve and occupy the face of the earth. Around million years ago, human beings arrived on the scene as the crown of creative evolution.[6]

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5 Miller, S.L. "A Production of Amino Acids under Possible Primitive Earth Conditions," *Science* 117 (1953), 528-29.

6 Christian de Duve, "The Beginning of Life on Earth," *Scientific American*, 1995, (www.americanscientist.org).

The chemical structure of all cells (ribonucleic acid or deoxyribonucleic acid), whether in the leaves of trees, the fishes in water, the grass in the field or human brain, is quite similar. This indicates that plants and animals, despite enormous diversity, spring from the same origin and are intimately related. All living beings are members of a single extended family.

Many studies have concluded that 75% of human genes or their close variants exist in worms, 50% exist in banana and 98.4% exist in apes. Similarly there is homology (similarity) between different living organisms in amino acids and proteins which are produced by genes.[7]

Once human beings with their thinking capacity began to settle down, they developed newer and newer ways of making their life better and safer. They started domesticating animals and plants for food and work. They also moved from one place to another and settled down in newer areas where they could develop tools and technologies.

With the domestication and nurturing of plants and animals, the increase in population density, the introduction of agricultural technologies like irrigation and the development of metallurgy and pottery, the Great Civilization emerged first in Mesopotamia some 5500 years ago, later on in Harappa on the banks of the Indus river, in China and in the Mayan and Aztec civilizations of Meso-america.[8] Religion played an important role in developing these civilizations. The shrines, temples and priests often played a significant role in the social, political and economic life as well. These civilizations also gave rise to the great classical religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, which have in turn profoundly shaped our moral and religious consciousness. Many of the moral principles which still influence our actions today were fashioned in this period.

As long as human beings lived in harmony with the environment, it was beautiful and charming. The environment was a true home for all living and non-living components, preserving especially the biodiversity and the resources with all their splendor and uniqueness.

7 Tomkins, J.P., "Common DNA Sequences: Evidence of Evolution or Efficient Design," *Acts & Facts*, 38 (8), (2009), 12-13.

8 Bogucki, P., *The origins of Human Society* (New York: Wiley Blackwell, 1999).

2. The Present

Our development processes and technological practices have become a threat to life on this environment and to the environment itself. The threat is constituted by large-scale devastation of the environment, damage to water, air and soil, and to genetic diversity, by destruction of rain forests, extensive soil erosion and desertification, by massive use of pesticides, insecticides and herbicides which deplete and poison the soil, by the squander and destruction of sea resources, mangrove swamps and coral reefs, by anarchic and profligate industrial production and overconsumption as well as overuse and waste of nature's scarce and non-renewable treasures, by the ambiguities of nuclear technology, the horrors of nuclear weaponry and the hazards of radioactive waste.[9]

The crises are often described in terms of acid rains, death of lakes and rivers, extinction of species, the depletion of the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect, diseases and death from chemically and radioactively contaminated food, air and water, denuding of rain forests, loss of biodiversity, extinction of water resources, global warming, etc.

2.1. Depletion of Resources and Loss of Biodiversity

At present, natural habitats and ecosystems are being destroyed at the rate of over 100 million hectares every year. Some nine million hectares of forests are lost every year. Almost 50% of the world's wetlands were lost in the past century. Some 100 to 150 species are lost every day. If the current destruction rate in forests and coral reefs continues, 50% of the earth's plants and animal species will be extinct soon. Two thirds of the ocean's fisheries are over-fished. Over-pumping of underground water is leading to serious water shortages.[10]

Reserves of oil and gas cannot supply a constantly increasing rate of consumption. Coal is steadily becoming more and more uneconomic

9 United Nations Environment Programme, 2005; Atlas of Our Changing Environment, UNEP, New York, U.S.A.

10 M.P. Singh and Arvind Kumar, *Biodiversity and Conservation* (Delhi: Aph Publishing Corporation, 2005).

to mine. North sea oil production is already in decline. Some important metals may become exhausted by the end of the century, if they continue to be used up at the present rate.

2.2. Pollution

All industrial countries are polluters of water, land and air, through overuse of chemicals and pesticides, industrial effluent and radioactive wastes. Toxic wastes are dumped everywhere. Agricultural additives are continually used. Chemical pesticides and defoliants are being spread all around. About 7,000 synthetically produced chemicals are used for various purposes. These together with the enormous amount of toxic effluents and wastes continue to poison and pollute the air, land and water.

Several gases that modem industries and chemical plants emit continue to poison and damage the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide is injected into the atmosphere every day, mainly through industrial activity, coal burning, car exhausts and inorganic fertilizers. Throwing toxic substances into the air does not merely damage the air we breathe; it also contaminates the water, and affects woodlands and the soil. Rivers and seas are polluted.

The quality of groundwater is also in the process of degradation as it becomes increasingly contaminated through pesticides and chemical fertilizers. Rain and irrigation-water transport toxic substances into deeper layers of the earth. Chemical wastes dumped into the earth and oceans turn the land into desert and water into murderous liquid. Very often poor farmers are ignorant of the negative effects of the chemicals and pesticides.[11]

2.3. Deforestation and Desertification

Huge tracts of tropical rainforest, rich in animal and plant species, are being systematically cleared for agriculture or harvested for fuel-wood, paper, timber, etc. Deforestation is accelerating. Soon half of the world's tropical forests would have disappeared, adding to

11 Colls, J. *Air Pollution,* (New York: Spon Press, 2002); Wikitext, 2013.

the frequency and forces of floods and droughts and impairing the production of oxygen.[12]

The deserts have been extending in all parts of the world. Fifty per cent of grazing land has become deserts. This occurs, not so much because of natural disasters, but because of over grazing, removal of plant life and deforestation of mountains. Crop land is losing top soil endangering food security. Land is undergoing degradation through urban development, erosion, salination and desertification. This too can affect food supply, especially as population keeps growing. High salinity and water logging also render land unproductive.

2.4. Climate Change and Global Warming

Scientists are now virtually unanimous that global warming is happening. Global warming through the greenhouse effect poses the greatest environmental threat. The earth's atmospheric temperature has been rising because the amount of carbon dioxide and other deleterious gases has been increasing.

Due to the burning of fossil fuels and changes in vegetation, especially destruction of rainforest, the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has risen by 25%. Increase in carbon dioxide prevents re-radiation of energy. This causes global warming and greenhouse effect, which can lead to climate changes such as changes in the sea level and temperatures with fatal consequences for habitat, vegetation, agriculture and food production.

At a minimum, a mean temperature rise of three or four degree Celsius is projected. The rise in the polar region could be as high as 6 degree Celsius. Such a warming of the earth's atmosphere will lead to a significant rise in the level of the oceans and therefore cause widespread flooding in coastal plains and many of the world's most densely populated cities. Even the minimal estimate would imply a rise in sea-level of 1.5 metres with massive flooding.[13]

12 T.C. Whitmore and J.A. Sayer, *Tropical Deforestation and Species Extinction: The IUCN Forest Conservation Programme*, (New York: Springer).

13 UNEP, 2003. "How Will Global Warming Affect My World," UNEP, Geneva, Switzerland.

A temperature change of a few degrees one way or another is all that is needed to bring about a new ice age or to melt the polar icecaps. The climatic changes which might be expected to follow from temperature change will adversely affect some of the world's most fertile lands. An unprecedented warming of the earth's atmosphere threatens to disrupt world food production.

2.5. Damage to Ozone Layer

Damage to ozone layer is one of the many signs that environmental damage has reached crisis proportions. Depletion of the earth's ozone layer will expose life to excessive ultra-violet radiation which is damaging to genetic material. The ozone layer protects higher animals including human beings from skin cancer. It is much more deleterious to microorganisms and other lower forms of life.

The thinning of the ozone layer was disputed earlier but now it has been proved with scientific data and satellite images. The size of the hole in the ozone layer changes and it moves around. The damage to ozone layer comes mainly from the enormous increase in nitrogen fertilizer releasing nitrous oxide into the atmosphere, supersonic aircrafts, and chlorofluorocarbons which are used mainly as propellant substances for aerosol cans and as refrigerants.

2.6. Erosion of Soil

Throughout the world soil is being eroded or losing its fertility. Through a whole battery of destructive agricultural practices, human beings are depleting the soil and causing massive erosion. It is estimated that 75 billion tonnes are lost world-wide each year. The destruction of topsoil in third world countries due to erosion, overgrazing, inappropriate methods of farming and salinization is very worrying. The loss of top soil has reached disastrous proportions in many tropical countries. It needs 1200 years to accumulate 6 inches of top soil. With the destruction of the rain forest, the fragile topsoil is quickly eroded by the wind, sun and torrential rain, especially during the monsoons. Eighty per cent of grasslands are suffering from soil degradation.

2.7. Natural Calamities

Floods and hurricanes are two examples of natural calamities which have been occurring frequently in recent years. Hurricanes are now traceable to the effects of temperature differences between the atmosphere and the sea and are therefore likely in the foreseeable future to become far fiercer than any we have known so far.

2.8. Nuclear Waste

Nuclear tests and the dumping of nuclear wastes in the Pacific, for instance, have destroyed many islands and their peoples. Some islands have disappeared. Others are releasing radioactive rays into the water bodies. People suffer from radiation sickness. Children are born deformed and have genetic defects. The nuclear accident in Chernobyl had caused tremendous harm to the health of people.

2.9. Damages

Large dams, the production and storing of biological and chemical weapons and nuclear power plants erupting all over the earth are sources of multiple environmental imbalances and threats. All these individually and cumulatively cause diseases and death, both swift and slow, as well as extinction of plant and animal species. The pressure of expanding industrial production accelerates the damage no less than the ceaseless exploitation of the earth's limited resources.

2.10. Water Crisis

All over the world the underground water table is diminishing. Over-pumping of underground water is leading to serious water shortages. Recent scientific estimates of fresh water availability in the world have indicated a decline of about 30% all over the world. The quality of available water is poor. There are widespread water-related diseases such as dysentery and deaths due to unsafe water.[14]

14 Sunita Narain, ed., *Down to Earth* (New Delhi: Society for Environmental Communication, 2016), 1- 66.

2.11. Decline in the Quality of Human Life and the Breakdown of Society

Many cities in the world which are not environment-friendly have become unhealthy to live. There is not enough green space depriving people of physical contact with nature. Increased violence, drug menace, atrocities against the vulnerable are some examples of such decline. Real relationships between people are harmed by modern devices.

2.12. Global Inequality

In the name of development, the rich are benefitting and the poor are suffering. Environmental degradation promotes environmental refugees. Conservative tendencies of some people, unequal distribution of available resources, debt of poor countries, etc., are some of the inequalities that exist at the global level.

3. The Future

How did we come to such an impasse? How is it that human beings treat the earth system and its life processes so casually, so brutally, so meanly, so arrogantly and foolishly? Some environmental destruction may have always existed but only recently it has become a fatal global and existential problem. How are we to respond?

We are using more and more of earth's resources and living in a way that is depleting thousands and thousands of species of plants and animals and endangering hundreds and thousands of others. We need to realize that the human community must now become aware of how crucial its behaviour is for the well-being of the community of life on earth.[15]

If we continue to poison our land, air and water and waste our timber, mineral and other natural resources we are heading full speed towards disaster for all life forms on earth, including ourselves. Problems of

15 Will Steffen, "Making Ecosystem Service Approaches Operational," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 106, (2009), 1301-02.

such magnitude may initially appear rather distant, but ultimately they will affect the lives of each one of us.

Environmental destruction threatens the world with unprecedented human suffering. If the world continues to tolerate and accept disappearing of rain forests, land degradation, tree cover, desertification, extinction of plants and animals, pollution of land, air and water and the changing chemistry of the atmosphere, it will also have to accept economic decline and social disintegration. In a world where progress depends upon a complex set of national and international agreements, such disintegration would bring human suffering on a large scale.

Human abuse of God's creation (environment) extends from the depths of the sea to the atmosphere many miles above the earth. We are guilty of using natural resources which are in finite supply with thoughtless greed and causing unnecessary pollution. The effects of this bad stewardship will be felt not just by ourselves, but by people in all parts of the world. It will also affect the future generations. The quality of many people's lives will diminish as the benefits of the earth's rich and varied natural resources are lost forever.

The environmental problems enumerated above loom over the whole earth and affect every person, and every living being. It is in the air we breathe, in the water we drink and in the land we dwell on. No continent or no country is spared. The problem is not limited to any one or the other. It is there for the Christian, for the Hindu, for the Muslim, for the Buddhist and the agnostic. Environmental devastation has no political party affiliation either. It is a universal problem. It affects all nations, religions, races, languages and cultures.

The environmental crisis is a problem caused by the behaviour of the humans, and not simply an automatic effect of the cycle of energy. Our business practices are destroying life on the earth. Given corporate practices not one wildlife reserve, wilderness, or indigenous culture will survive the global market economy. We know that every living natural system on the planet is disintegrating before our eyes. The land, water, air and sea have been transformed from life-giving systems into repositories of waste.

So because of our greed and our use of violence we have spoiled the soil and denigrated the environment and caused irreparable damage to the earth. We have lost touch with our inner self, with the sacredness of the earth. There is complex interdependence among various species in the biosphere. Every species makes some constructive contribution—small or great—to the environment of the planet earth. For example, if the vegetation—grasses and shrubs—decreases, the herbivores suffer. And if the herbivores decrease, the carnivores are affected.

Environment provides us direct benefits and without it we will not be able to survive. Majority of medicines presently in use and all our foods are derived from plants and animals. The cost of over-the-counter drugs from plants alone has been estimated to be about US$ 85 billion worldwide. Yet only a tiny fraction of biodiversity has been utilized in the allopathic medicines. Similarly in 1997 an international team of economists and environmental scientists came out with a figure of US$ 33 trillion for all ecosystem services provided by natural systems to humanity free of charge. This amount was more than twice the total GDP of the world.[16]

The general assembly of the United Nations (UN) was worried about the continued loss of biological diversity, and acknowledged that an unprecedented effort was needed to achieve a significant reduction in the rate of loss of biological diversity. It was also deeply concerned about the social, economic, environmental and cultural implications of the loss of biodiversity and it was conscious of the need for effective education to raise public awareness. Hence the general assembly of the UN adopted the resolution to declare 2010 as the international year of biodiversity recalling the agenda 21 on the conservation of biological diversity by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 and recalling also the Convention on Biological Diversity which was ratified by 188 countries.[17] By this declaration UN invites all countries and people to take efforts to increase awareness

16 Newt Gingrich and Terry L. Maple, *A Contract with the Earth* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

17 United Nations, 1993. "Convention on Biological Diversity," UN, New York, USA; www.cbd.int/

on the importance of biodiversity by promoting actions at the local, regional and international levels.

Ecosystem services include regulation of the atmosphere and climate, purification and retention of fresh water, formation and enrichment of soil, nutrient cycling, detoxification and re circulation of waste, pollination of crops and the production of lumber, fodder and biomass fuel. Few people realize, for example, that 40% of the world economy is derived from biodiversity. The services worldwide is estimated to be Rs 950 trillion which is similar to figures resulting from all goods and services that are provided by people.[18]

Some people think that the environment should be preserved simply because of its existence. Others argue that humans have no right to exterminate what God has created. One important reason to protect the environment is strictly economic. The world's ecosystems harbour an incredible number of different organisms, and these can be beneficial to humans in a wide variety of ways. For example, wild species can be used as source of food. Throughout history people have used about 7000 different kinds of plants for food. Today farmers are concentrating the greatest portion of their effort on a dozen varieties of grains, such as wheat, rice, and maize, as well as on tubers such a potatoes and cassava. However, biologists estimate that there are at least 75,000 edible species of plants and many of these are superior to varieties that are commonly cultivated. Many medicines have been derived from plants. Today scientists recognize that many of the herbs contain potent pharmaceuticals and are used in scientific research.

The final reason for preserving species and perhaps the most compelling, concerns the richness and variety of life on this planet. The earth is constantly changing. Climates change; environments change; and products and food stuffs change. Traditionally, species of plants and animals have always evolved along with their changing environment. If species are allowed to become extinct now or in a few years, the total global potential for adaptation and change will

18 European Commission, "Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity," *Science for Environment Policy*, 11 (2015), 1-32.

be greatly diminished, and the diversity of future ecosystems may be endangered.

To protect the environment we need a different kind of relationship, a different view and a different perception. We need to have a different estimate of environment's role in the salvation of the world and an adequate vision of the destiny of the universe. We need to develop an environmental spirituality that will prompt us to act in favour of protecting the environment.[19] We are invited to work for the redemption of the whole creation.

A Call to Act

The effect of environmental degradation is being felt all over the world through pollution, solid and liquid waste, climate change, water scarcity, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, depletion of natural resources, throw away culture, urban congestion, breakdown of society and global inequality.

Urgent action is needed to prevent environmental degradation. Every person of good will has a moral responsibility to work for environmental justice. In recent times the Catholic Church has called on the Catholics to recognize environmental stewardship as their Christian responsibility. Specifically Pope Paul VI, Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI were very proactive in voicing their concerns related to environment and prompted people to get involved in safeguarding environment.

In the Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens,*[20] Pope Paul VI had warned against a tragic consequence of unchecked human activity. 'Due to an ill-considered exploitation of nature, humanity runs the risk of destroying it and becoming in turn a victim of this degradation.' Pope John Paul II[21] warned against the tendency 'to see no other meaning in natural environment than what serves for

19 S. Ignacimuthu, *Environment Spirituality*, (Mumbai: St Paul's, 2010), 1-126.

20 Apostolic Letter, *Octogesima Adveniens* (14 may 1971), 21: AAS 63 (1971), 416-17.

21 Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979), 15: AAS 71 (1979), 287.

immediate use and consumption.' Pope Benedict XVI[22] wrote that the earth's treasurers no longer serve to build God's garden for all to live in, but they have been made to serve the powers of exploitation and destruction.

The historical encyclical *'Laudato Si'* by Pope Francis[23] at this critical juncture when the world is facing dramatic environmental challenges calls for a relationship with our common home. In this encyclical the Pope is inviting all people to cherish our common home as God's gift to all of us and to shape the future of our planet constructively in a sustainable manner. He highlights some of the most serious challenges facing us and also identifies the root causes for all these. This encyclical calls all people on this planet earth to action. The care for the environment is not simply the work of politicians or business people but it is the noble task of all.

22 Woodeene Koening-Bricker, *Ten Commandments for the Environment : Pope Benedict XVI Speaks out for Creation and Justice*, (Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2009), 2.

23 Pope Francis, Encyclical letter *Laudato Si* (24 May 2015).

ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS OF OUR TIMES
A Gandhian Response

Joy Kachappilly, sdb

Abstract: *The constant admonitions that the environmentalists proffer regarding the impending environmental crisis caused by humanity's reckless exploitation of nature have made every social institution and right thinking individual to re-think their attitude and approach towards the earth and its resources and to chalk out action plans on a war-footing to save the planet. This has resulted in a concerted effort on the part of everyone to rediscover the broader community of creatures, which includes not only human beings but also the whole creation. The article examines the thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi on the need to conserve the environment and suggests some Gandhian solutions to address the environmental crisis. In fact, it can be said that the entire life of Gandhi was an ecological treatise. The essay is an invitation to emulate the Gandhian teachings on simplicity of life-style by eschewing the unlimited cravings to which people can easily fall prey to so that our environment can be safeguarded for the generations to come. The article is a tribute to Prof. A. Pushparajan, who has made significant contributions towards the preservation of the environment through his writings, lectures, seminars and action plans.*

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The constant admonitions that the environmentalists proffer regarding the impending environmental crisis[1] caused by humanity's reckless

1 Environmental crisis can be understood as a dramatic, unexpected, and irreversible worsening of the environment leading to significant welfare losses. Environmental

exploitation of nature have made every social institution and right thinking individual to re-think their attitude and approach towards the earth and its resources and to chalk out action plans on a war-footing to save the planet. It is frequently construed that the environmental concerns were neglected in the past often blinded by the industrial and technological progress of the recent times. However, today there is a concerted effort on the part of everyone "to rediscover the broader community of creatures which includes not only human beings, but the whole creation."[2] A number of thinkers and social activists have arisen in the course of history to remind people of the importance of preserving the environment. Mahatma Gandhi was not only a political giant, a revolutionary of an extraordinary type, a humanist and pacifist of international fame but also an environmentalist who was able to foresee the future and visualize the dangers inherent in the kind of

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crisis can adversely affect climate, conservation of species, natural resources, energy, health, soil, population, water, air, etc. which can have baneful consequences that are difficult to reverse. In his book, *Sacred Groves among Communities*, J.J. Roy Burman lists some of the environmental crises and the reasons for them. He writes: "Today we are faced with an environmental crisis of massive proportions. The crisis of the environment involves not merely isolated and particular problems such as the pollution of our lakes, rivers, the smog of our cities and the devastating effect of pesticides on our food. It involves a threat to life on this planet and quality of this life. Alternations of the environment can destroy, and are destroying in many cases, the balance of nature, which sustains that life system. The causes of this crisis are multitude: the misuse of technology to pollute, excessive proliferation of human species, and ignorance of causal relationships in nature. The basic underlying causes of this crisis are mistaken values and attitudes." J.J. Roy Burman, *Sacred Groves among Communities* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2003), 1. According to another study, it is estimated that some 35,000 vegetal and animal species were lost by the year 2000. Tropical forests are shrinking by 11 million hectares per year. As estimated 26 billion tons of topsoil on croplands is lost annually in excess of new soil formation. Some 6 million hectares of new desert are formed annually by land mismanagement. Underground water tables are falling in most parts of the world and some 59 pesticides contaminate groundwater in 32 American States. About 2,500 toxic wastes need cleaning in the United States alone. It is estimated that 1.7 billion people lack access to clean water. The list is endless. And this calls for urgent responses to avert the looming environmental degradation. It becomes all the more pertinent when we consider the fact that the human being, the crown of creation, is responsible for the ill health of our planet.

2 Christoph Stückelberger, *We All Are Guests on Earth: A Global Christian Vision for Climate Justice* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2010), 21-22.

development the nations opted for following the Industrial Revolution in the West.[3] In this essay, I shall begin with a brief discussion on the causes that have brought about the environmental crisis that the planet earth is facing today. The article then goes on to examine the thoughts of Gandhi on the need to conserve the environment and suggests some Gandhian solutions to ease the environmental crisis. The essay is aimed at unraveling the important contributions that Gandhi made for the preservation of our mother earth. It is a tribute to Prof. A. Pushparajan, my teacher and mentor, in whose honour a *Festschrift* is published. Prof. Pushparajan has contributed much towards the preservation of the environment through his writings, lectures, seminars and action plans. The article is also an invitation to emulate the Gandhian teachings on simplicity of life-style by eschewing the unlimited wants to which people can easily fall prey so that our environment can be safeguarded for the generations to come.

1. Causes for the Environmental Crisis of Our Times

In one of his books entitled *Ecological Worldview for a Just Society*,[4] Prof. Pushparajan very rightly named the fifth chapter as "Plundering of the House and Raping the Mother Earth." He feels that human beings are plundering the very house in which they live. They lay bare the mother earth that provides everything they need. The children of the earth are, in fact, raping the mother earth, which supplies all the necessities for their daily sustenance. For him, the inordinate stress given to market economy, which is always characterized by profit motive,[5] in the last few centuries could be identified as the chief cause for such a sorry situation. Millions of years have been taken for nature to nurture all the things that are required for the planet

3 Many people may not consider Gandhi as an environmentalist. This is because the environmental problems surfaced largely in the post-Gandhian era. Although the concern for environment has assumed importance only in recent years, Gandhi made substantial contributions to the preservation of the environment through his writings, actions and by his very life. The present article is meant to understand these contributions made by Gandhi to the preservation of our environment.

4 A. Pushparajan, *Ecological Worldview for a Just Society* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1992).

5 By profit motive we mean the desire to benefit oneself, unmindful of its effects on others, on the society and the nature at large. The motive of personal gain thus tends to become the dominating motive in industry.

to maintain itself and to create an ambience for beings to live on it. But unfortunately during the last two hundred years, humans have exploited what the nature has been nurturing for ages. This is not the way the people in the ancient times understood the land and the earth.[6] In our relation to the earth today, there are three factors, which cause concern, namely, "the commercialization of Earth, the global imbalance in land/population proportion and the ecological crisis."[7] It is time that the earth is liberated from the crudeness and violence of commercial culture and to facilitate it to reassert its dignity as the sacrament of God and source of shared life. Unfortunately, the earth system is being polluted and destroyed through wasteful, profligate and predatory practices by modern profit-oriented scientific technological culture, be it industrial, agricultural or communicational.[8] Other causes for the ecological crisis are poverty and misuse of wealth. The poor in the world are compelled over the short run to destroy precisely the resources on which their long-term subsistence depends, while the wealthy majority in their inordinate desire for riches reduces the poor to become substitute victims.[9]

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6 To cite an example: during the colonial period, when the white delegates came for signature for a treaty alienating Indian lands, a chief of the northern Blackfeet Tribe refused. He said: "Our land is more valuable than your money…As long as the sun shines and the waters flow, this land will be here to give life to men and animals. We cannot sell the lives of men and animals; therefore we cannot sell this land. It was put here for us by the Great Spirit, and we cannot sell it because it does not belong to us. You can count your money and burn it within a node of a buffalo's head, but only the Great Spirit can count the grains of sand and the blades of grass of these plains. As a present to you we will give you anything we have that you can take with you; but the land never." Cf., Teresa C McLuhan, *Touch the Earth: A Self-Portrait of Indian Existence* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), 53.

7 Kurien Kunnumpuram, "Nature, Woman and the Church: Indian Christian Reflections on Ecology, Feminism and Ecclesiology," in *Collected Writings of Samuel Rayan*, vol., 1 (Delhi: ISPCK, 2013), 16.

8 Kurien Kunnumpuram, "Nature, Woman and the Church: Indian Christian Reflections on Ecology, Feminism and Ecclesiology," 19.

9 Fatima Kanikkai, "World Trade without Morality: Evil Effects of Globalization on Ecology," *Value Crisis on the Way Out: A Commemorative Volume, National Conference on Values Indian Society of Gandhian Studies, Silver Jubilee Session October 29-31, 2002*, ed., A Pushparajan (Madurai: Department of Interreligious Relations, Madurai Kamaraj University, 2002), 84.

Often, the powerful lobbies are of the opinion that the current crisis in the environment is exaggerated. According to them, the growth in population is a major factor for environmental disaster. They rely on the scientific and philosophical theories enunciated during the renaissance by both philosophers as well as scientists. The thinkers like Francis Bacon, Rene Descartes, Baruch Spinoza and Gottfried Leibniz viewed the role of mathematics as final in human societies.[10] The scientific temper to a large extent was linked to the capitalistic economic order. Neo-liberal thinkers argue for free economy stressing that economic life should not be trampled over. They hold that capitalism itself has no ills and given full options to the capitalists, they will have interest in preserving a good environment.

However, today such views have undergone changes and we know much better about nature. Humans can cause massive and permanent damage to natural landscapes, deplete natural resources and harm ecosystems. Not only do we know that we can cause these injuries to nature, we also know how we cause them, and how we can prevent or remedy them. Having known all these facts, we have now a moral obligation to act with care, prudence and, at times, with moderation and restraint.

Often many environmentalists fail to concede the deep co-relation that exists between our approach to nature and social relationships. Commenting on this inconsistency, Felix Wilfred writes: "The destruction of the ecosystem at the same time causes wounds of injustice in the body of society… An equitable distribution of natural resources is the best guarantee against the exploitative use of them that is causing the present environmental crisis."[11] Ecological justice

10 In fact, Descartes made mathematics "the measure of the inquiring mind," and he pursued a method of doubt not because he was a sceptic but because "he posits the mathematical as the absolute ground and seeks for all knowledge a foundation that will be in accord with it." In "mathematics," Descartes finds, "the very first and highest basic principle for the Being of beings in general." Peter J. Leithart, "Farewell to Descartes?" 27 February 2011. Http://www.credenda.org/index.php/Theology/farewell-to-descartes.html, accessed on 11 November 2012.

11 Felix Wilfred, "Toward an Inter-religious Eco-theology," *Concilium* (2009/3), 52.

covers the human society in the present and future. It encompasses all living and non-living beings on the planet. "Spirit is life; its opposite is not matter but death and all that lead to death, such as oppression, injustice, and destruction of our homely habitat."[12]

The understanding of the earth as mother became central to the organic cosmology of the classical period. Hence the present day ecological movements need to revisit the values of the pre-modern organic worldview.[13] According to B. Lonergan everything including nature finds its value ultimately in the final cause, which is the ground of every dependent being. "The final cause, then, is the ground of value, and it is the ultimate cause of causes for it overcomes contingence at its deepest level. Being cannot be arbitrary, and contingent being must be a reasonably realized possibility. Its possibility is grounded in the exemplary cause, its realization in the efficient cause, but its reasonableness in the final cause."[14]

A deeper understanding of nature will reveal the fact that in nature we discern three levels of values. Freya Matthews identifies them as background value, intrinsic value and instrumental value. Matthews derives background value from the intrinsic value of the cosmos. The cosmos as a whole is considered as self-maintaining, and as such, possessing intrinsic value. The instrumental value applies when something promotes the wellbeing of something else.[15] Ken Wilber corroborates this view when he writes: "Because human beings contain matter and life and mind, as components in their own make up, then of course we must honour all these holons,[16] not only for their own intrinsic worth, which is the most important, but also because

12 Thomas Manickam, "Holistic Ethics and Global Environmental Crises," *Journal of Dharma* 33 (2008, 2), 129.

13 Joseph Peruma, *The Motherly Earth: An Ecological Ethics of Human-Nature Relationship* (Bangalore: Claretian Publications, 2002), 65.

14 B. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 1983), 657.

15 Freya Matthews, *The Ecological Self* (London: Rutledge, 1994), 118.

16 Holon is something that is simultaneously a whole and a part. Arthur Koestler coined the word in his book *The Ghost in the Machine*. For further reading, cf., Arthur Koestler, *The Ghost in the Machine* (New York: Macmillan, 1967).

they are components in our own being, and destroying them is literally suicidal for us."[17]

The life abounding earth is a miraculous event and we cannot take it for granted or exploit it to satisfy our unlimited wants. Instead, as rational and spiritual beings, humans must grow in sensitivity to appreciate the value-laden character of nature with respect and learn to preserve it. We need to look for role models who lived their lives in tune with nature and promoted the need to preserve nature through their writings and actions. Mahatma Gandhi is one such example, whose thoughts on environment we shall discuss below.

2. Gandhian Response to Environmental Concerns

Mahatma Gandhi who played a stellar role in India's freedom struggle is also known for his views on the need to safeguard the environment. His main contribution lay in the fact that he bridged the gulf between the intelligentsia and the masses and widened the concept of Swaraj[18] to include almost every aspect of social, economic, moral, religious and environmental regeneration. When we delve deep into his thought and writings, we will immediately understand that he had insights and foresights that were quite bewildering. One is really surprised by his farsightedness so clearly and emphatically expressed in the *Hind Swaraj*[19] which was published a century ago in 1909 when few

17 Ken Wilber, *A Brief History of Everything* (Boston: Shambhala, 1996), 38.

18 Swaraj means 'Self-Rule' or 'Self-Government.'

19 *Hind Swaraj* or *Indian Home Rule* was written during his voyage from England to South Africa on board *SS Kildonan Castle* between 13 November and 30 November 1909. Gandhi was disappointed at the failure of his second deputation to London meant to settle amicably the issues concerning the Indians living in South Africa. But he was determined to fight to the bitter end the battle of Satyagraha. He was also appalled by the revolutionary views held by the Indian anarchists. While in the ship, under the impulse of a sudden inspiration, Gandhi hurried to the warm lounge, pulled out some of the ship's stationery and began to write as one possessed. Within ten days he had covered 275 sheets with 30,000 Gujarati words of *Hind Swaraj*. It is a severe condemnation of modern civilization and called it satanic as it is bereft of moral values. The book is divided into twenty chapters dealing with Swaraj, civilization, lawyers, doctors, machinery, education, passive resistance, etc. In the book, besides advocating the gospel of love in the place of hatred, he makes a scathing attack on the craze for labour-saving machinery. At

people talked of environmental problems and hazards. Similarly, one is overwhelmed by his grasp of the resultant human predicament and his ingenuity to suggest appropriate measures to root out the problem rather than search for a solution to control it.

It is true that Gandhi never explicitly spoke of environment protection. However what he said and did make him an environmentalist. *Hind Swaraj* cautioned humankind against the unrestricted industrialization and the resultant materialistic and consumerist worldview. He did not want India to follow the West in this regard and warned that if India, with its vast population, tried to imitate the West then the resources of the earth would not be enough. He argued that industrialization and machines not only have an adverse effect on the health of people but also on the wellbeing of our planet.

Gandhi was of the view that humans exploited nature to the extent of disturbing its normal functioning. Dr J.C. Kumarappa, the enunciator of Gandhian economics, proffers the rationale behind it. He wrote:

> Work in nature consists in the effort put forth by the various factors—insentient and sentient—which cooperate to complete this cycle of life. If this cycle is broken, at any stage, at any time, consciously or unconsciously, violence results as a consequence of such a break. When violence intervenes in this way, growth or progress is stopped, ending finally in destruction and waste. Nature is unforgiving and ruthless. Therefore, self-interest and self-preservation demand complete non-violence; cooperation and submission to the way of nature if we are to maintain permanency by non-interference with and by not short-circuiting the cycle of life.[20]

One of the root causes of this unchecked exploitation of nature, according to Gandhi, is consumerism and materialism. In fact,

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the time of its publication, many condemned the book as taking humankind to the pre-historic times. After a century of its publication, today more than ever, after experiencing the ill effects of environmental degradation, we can rightly state that Gandhi was right in his condemnation of the rapid industrialisation. For a reading of the book, cf., M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj* or *Indian Home Rule*, 11th reprint (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1996).

20 J. C. Kumarappa, *Economy of Permanence*, 5th edn (Varanasi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1984), 2.

consumerism goes hand in hand with materialism.[21] To satiate the materialistic and consumerist urge of the modern society, nature had to be exploited to the point of its degradation. This results in a conflict between humans and nature. When the humans extract the resources from mother earth to meet their ever-increasing needs, the nature tries to maintain its stability. However, if the exploitation goes beyond a limit, nature is not able to maintain the balance and is unable to replenish and cure herself.[22] The notion that science and technology increase the quantity of good is a myth because the production of any good requires both natural resources and human-made factors of production. When we increase the productivity of labour, capital and organization, we have to use more land or the available land intensively. Raw materials are also required but they come from nature. High-level technology requires more energy. Thus, nature is over-taxed.

In his *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi held that the industrialized societies were becoming selfish, competitive and grossly destructive of nature. For him, the distinguishing characteristic of modern civilization was that it multiplied infinite number of wants in humans. Large-scale industrial units had to be set up to satisfy the unlimited wants of the people. The raw materials to feed these industries have to be extracted from nature in large quantities, which are non-renewable and hence depleting the resources at a pace much faster than nature can replenish. Against such a mistaken view of development Gandhi wrote: "civilization, in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants."[23]

21 Materialism can be defined as a tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort more important than spiritual values. Consumerism, on the other hand, can be understood as a preoccupation with consumer goods and their acquisition. Thus, consumerism is concerned with the acquisition of or the process of obtaining goods. Cf., *Oxford English Reference Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 2002.

22 For example, if someone smokes in a closed room, people will feel suffocated but if s/he smokes in the open, then people will not feel suffocated. This is because the dirt gets dispersed in the atmosphere. It is cleared in the atmosphere and it gets dissipated with the good air. This means that nature has the power to dissipate the dirt and make it immobilized. But if we persistently emit the same effluent without allowing the nature to recoup herself, then the nature gets polluted.

23 Prabhu and Rao, eds, *Mind of Mahatma Gandhi*, 3rd edn (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1968), 189.

In the place of such large-scale industries and wanton consumerist outlook, Gandhi suggested a simple life-style based on physical labour.[24] He implored people to live in simplicity so that others as well as the future generations can also enjoy the bounty of nature. He believed that earth provides enough to satisfy every person's need but not every person's greed. The rich need to restrict their wants and consider themselves as mere trustees of their wealth and use it for the welfare of the poor. This can be done only if people can distinguish between their real needs and artificial wants and control the latter. In fact, he felt that "man falls from the pursuit of the ideal of plain living and high thinking the moment he wants to multiply his daily wants."[25]

Further, to satisfy all their wants, people have to forage far and wide for new materials and commodities. This also brings to the fore the concept of globalization. The governments have to liberalize, privatize and effect structural adjustments in order to establish new industrial units in far away locations and transport the finished goods to satisfy the inordinate wants of the people. Against this fast globalizing world where capitalism is gradually becoming the order of the day, Gandhi proposed the concept of decentralization of means and resources. He advocated a model of economic development, which talked of developing villages as an independent production and administrative

24 In fact, Gandhi called it as bread-labour, which is one of the vows that he stipulated for his followers who lived in his ashrams and took part in the Satyagraha movement. A Russian writer named T.M. Bondaref first stressed this. Leo Tolstoy gave it wide publicity. By bread-labour, Gandhi meant that to live human beings must work. The *Gita* enjoins in the third chapter that one who eats without offering sacrifice eats stolen food. Sacrifice here, according to Gandhi, can only mean bread-labour. If all had worked for their bread, then all distinctions of rank would be obliterated. The worldwide conflict between the capital and the labour, between the rich and the poor would cease to exist. The rich will be there but they would consider themselves to be only trustees of their property and would use it mainly in the public interest. Cf. M.K. Gandhi, *From Yeravda Mandir: Ashram Observances*, trans., Valji Govindji (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1932), 22. This vow also implies that every type of work is important. "No work that is done in His name and dedicated to Him is small. All work when so done assumes equal merit. A scavenger who works in His service shares equal distinction with a king who uses his gifts in His name and as a mere trustee." Cf. *Young India*, 25-11-1926; as cited by M.K. Gandhi, *India of My Dreams*, 6th reprint (Ahmadabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1997), 63.

25 Prabhu, *Mind of Mahatma Gandhi*, 490.

unit.[26] This has become more relevant today in order to save us from the various economic, social, ethical and emotional hazards caused by the large scale industrialization and have become silent killers of the human race.

Introducing the concept of *Swadeshi*, which in fact, he included as one of the eleven vows[27] that he stipulated to his followers who lived in his ashrams, Gandhi attempted to counteract the harmful consequences of globalization. The vow of *Swadeshi* means the spirit, which restricts persons to the use of services available in the immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote. In other

26 Writing in *Harijan* 26-7-1942, Gandhi presented his vision of an ideal village. "My idea of Village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity. Thus every village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children. Then if there is more land available, it will grow useful money crops, thus excluding ganja, tobacco, opium and the like. The village will maintain a village theatre, school and public hall. It will have its own waterworks ensuring clean supply. This can be done through controlled wells and tanks. Education will be compulsory up to the final basic course. As far as possible every activity will be conducted on the co-operative basis. There will be no castes such as we have today with their graded untouchability. Non-violence with its technique of Satyagraha and non-co-operation will be the sanction of the village community. There will be a compulsory service of village guards who will be selected by rotation from the register maintained by the village. The government of the village will be conducted by the Panchayath of five persons, annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. These will have all the authority and jurisdiction required. Since there will be no system of punishments in the accepted sense, this Panchayath will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office. Any village can become such a republic today without much interference, even from the present Government whose sole effective connection with the villages is the exaction of the village revenue. I have not examined here the question of relations with the neighbouring villages and the centre if any. My purpose is to present an outline of village government. Here there is perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own government. The law of non-violence rules him and his government. He and his village are able to defy the might of a world. For the law governing every villager is that he will suffer death in the defence of his and his village's honour."

27 The other vows that Gandhi enjoined are truth, nonviolence, celibacy, non-stealing, non-possession, bread labour, control of palate, fearlessness, equality of religions and untouchability.

words, it implies production for neighbours. However, he was quick to add: "A votary of *Swadeshi* will never harbour ill-will towards the foreigner; he will not be actuated by antagonism towards anybody on earth. *Swadeshism* is not a cult of hatred. It is a doctrine of selfless service that has its roots in the purest *Ahimsa*, that is, love."[28] His idea of *Swadeshi* if applied to the world at large with his theory of *antyodaya* (the last man), which speaks of providing every individual with the basic necessities can counteract the undesirable effects of globalization by ensuring that everyone benefits from the fruits of development.

Further, to replace large-scale mechanization,[29] Gandhi proposed labour intensive production. His emphasis on labour intensive production does not indicate that he was advocating obsolete machinery with less productivity. He was in favour of simple tools, which save individual labour and lighten the burden of millions of cottages.[30] While

28 *From Yeravda Mandir*, (1957), 66; as cited by Gandhi, M.K. Gandhi, *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi – The Voice of Truth*, ed., Shriman Narayan, vol. 6, 4th reprint (Ahmadabad: Navajivan publishing House, 1997), 339; Emphasis in the original.

29 To look at Gandhi in the context of technology is to understand that he was a man who had his doubts on the efficacy of large scale mechanisation that the modern civilization introduced. He did not dislike it. When Gandhi was asked "Do you hate machines?" Gandhi answered: "No. While my body itself is nothing but meticulous machinery, how can I dismiss it? My spinning wheel or even this toothpick, for that matter, is a machine. I hate not the machines, but this growing passion for machines. I hate the passion for the machines which work upon diminishing man power. Some talk about machine which could spare man power when thousands of people are thrown jobless on the streets. Yes, I want the human toil and time to be spared not just for a sect of people but for the humanity. I want the wealth to be accumulated not just in few hands but for all the people in the world. Today machines favour putting handful of people on top thousands." Similarly, Gandhi was not against modernization. He was against worshipping technology as a lord of salvation. As he thought salvation can never be brought from outside but attained internally. When one's soul is intoxicated by greed, Gandhi thought technology inevitably represents it. Further, he was not unaware of the role of tools in human upliftment. In fact, he had great curiosity towards tools. He had accepted many of the modern technological inventions not as a compromise but as a necessity. Thus, he travelled on trains, buses and ships. He once studied mechanism of propeller from the motor room while travelling on a ship to England. He reached out to the public through loudspeakers and printing machines.

30 M.K. Gandhi, *Young India*, 16-6-1926.

clarifying the role of machinery, he held that "mechanisation is good when the hands are few for the work intended to be accomplished. It is an evil when there are more hands than required for the works, as is the case in India. The problem is how to utilize their idle hours, which are equal to the working days of six months in the year."[31] He was against the craze for machinery in a labour-surplus economy like India and accepted the utilization of modern tools and implements only if they help in reducing unnecessary human labour. He wanted the production by the masses and not mass production. According to Gandhi, "the saving of labour of the individual should be the object, and honest humanitarian considerations, and not greed, the motive."[32]

The World Development Report of 1990 corroborated to these Gandhian views on machinery. It advised the developing countries to adopt labour-intensive technique of production to create job opportunities.[33] It is one of the ways of removing of poverty and unemployment in poor countries.[34] The Report further noted: "since labour is an abundant resource, encouraging its use is generally consistent with rapid and efficient growth."[35] Indian Planners are not unfamiliar with these views and suggestions, as Gandhi had discussed them many years ago, initially in *Hind Swaraj* and then in *Young India* and *Harijan*. His special focus was on Khadi and village

31 M.K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, 16-5-1936.

32 M.K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol., 25 (New Delhi: Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1967), 252.

33 The Report states: "...Against the background of achievement, it is all the more staggering, shameful that more than one billion people in the developing world are living in poverty. Progress in raising average incomes, however welcome, must not distract attention from this massive and continuing burden of poverty." Cf., *World Development Report 1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 10.

34 The Report says: "rapid and politically sustainable progress on poverty has been achieved by pursuing a strategy that has two equally important elements. The first element is to promote the productive use of the poor's most abundant asset, labour. It calls for policies that harness market incentives, social and political institutions, infrastructure and technology to that end...switching to an efficient, labour intensive pattern of development and investing more in the human capital of the poor are not only consistent with faster long-term growth; they contribute to it." Cf., *World Development Report 1990*, 3.

35 *World Development Report 1990*, 56.

industries. He wrote: "I have not contemplated, much less advised, the abandonment of a single, healthy, life-giving industrial activity for the sake of hand-spinning. The entire foundation of the spinning wheel rests on the fact that there are crores of semi-unemployment people in India... The spinning wheel is destructive of no enterprise whatever. It is life-giving activity."[36]

The essence of the Gandhian approach to technological progress lies in the fact that we need to treat nature as a friend and benefactor. This approach is opposite to what has been practised so far in the name of technology. All decentralized technological systems which make use of nature's in-built processes demand a pattern different from the way technology is used in the present day capitalistic model of production. If we can introduce appropriate technology[37] that fits small-scale, grassroots and community-centred rural masses, then they can become the harbingers of advancement, leading to development that is eco-friendly. The patterns of income distribution, inequality, poverty and unemployment still exist today as they were when Gandhi advocated the spinning wheel as a panacea for all ills. Hence, we can say that his emphasis on Khadi and village industries was not a temporary measure, but a permanent solution to overcome the root problems of poverty and unemployment in India without harming the environment.

In advocating the simplicity of life-style, the Isha Upanishadic idea of renunciation in order to enjoy influenced Gandhi.[38] It means that in order to enjoy life, one cannot be selfishly attached to money, possessions, power or prestige, even family or friends. The moment

36 M.K. Gandhi, *Young India,* 27-5-1926.

37 Appropriate technology is an ideological movement originally articulated as 'intermediate technology' by the economist Dr E.F. Schumacher in his influential work, *Small Is Beautiful.* It is considered sustainable as it requires fewer natural resources and produces less pollution than techniques from mainstream technology, which are often wasteful and environmentally polluting. Gandhi too advocated this form of small, local and mostly village-based technology to help India's villages become self reliant, resisting the dependence associated with colonialism and to aid in the freedom struggle against British.

38 Isha Upanishad, verse 1. Cf., Sri Aurobindo, "Isha Upanishad," *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo*, vol., 17 (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, 2003), 5.

one is selfishly attached, he/she becomes a prisoner. Hence Gandhi believed that one is allowed to enjoy the resources of nature without being attached to them. This is because the humans are not the real owners of the natural resources and hence have no right to exploit them. Instead, they can use them for their requirements leaving the rest for others.

Thus, Gandhi proposed a voluntary reduction of wants. If this mad rush for industrialization and globalization consists in multiplication of wants, the only alternative is in reduction of wants voluntarily. People need to realize the importance of simplicity of life and the simplification of the machinery of living. Since Gandhi believed that one must be the change that one wants to see in the world, he practised simplicity in his own life. His life was his message. He opted for voluntary simplicity to end over-consumption. He held that consuming more than one's need would ultimately be at the expense of earth's resources. Thus, for example, he used scrapes of papers to write brief notes and made use of used envelops for sending letters.[39] Even when he used to bathe in the free flowing Sabarmati River, he was conscious to use only the minimum water needed for taking bath. However, he did not equate simple living with abject poverty. In fact, he believed that to deny a person the ordinary amenities of life is

39 An anecdote that explains Gandhi's meticulous use of things and the respect he owed to people who generously contributed to him for his cause is given. Soon after Gandhi's return from South Africa, a meeting of the Congress was held in Bombay. Kaka Saheb Kalelkar went there to help. One day Kaka Saheb found Gandhi anxiously searching around his desk. "What's the matter? What are you looking for?" Kaka Saheb asked. "I've lost my little pencil," answered Gandhi. Kaka Saheb was upset to see Gandhi wasting time and worrying about a little pencil. He took out his pencil and offered it to him. "No, no, I want my own little pencil," Gandhi insisted like a stubborn child. "Well, use it for the time being," said Kaka Saheb. "I'll find your pencil later. Don't waste time looking for it now." "You don't understand. That little pencil is very precious to me," Gandhi insisted. "Natesan's little son gave it to me in Madras. He gave it with so much love and affection. I cannot bear to lose it." Kaka Saheb didn't argue any more. He joined Gandhi in the search. At last they found it—a tiny piece, barely two inches long. But Gandhi was delighted to get it back. To him it was no ordinary pencil. It was the token of a child's love and to Gandhi; a child's love was very precious.

far worse than starving the body. It is also starving the soul, which dwells in the body. He wanted poverty to be eradicated and that can be done only when everyone uses only his/her share without grabbing what belongs to others. He believed in the principle of justice where everyone is entitled to his/her due. He also championed the cause of social justice wherein he believed that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities.

Gandhi stressed the significance of recycling of resources. A sustainable society has to aim at working in partnership with nature and conserve resources and energy, reduce wastes and avoid degradation of renewable resources. It should produce goods that are easy to recycle, reuse and repair after use. The methods of growing food and raising livestock have to be based on the use of soil and water conservation, bio-fertilizers and biological control of pests. The society should largely be a solar/wind/bio-mass based society together with a whole range of environment friendly technologies mainly based on renewable resources. Even these resources should be utilized prudently and the basic needs of people are to be met without any serious detriment to the environment. Gandhi also believed that non-violence and compassion are to be practised not only towards living beings, but also towards inanimate materials. The overuse of natural resources, motivated by greed and the desire for undue profit, is also violence, since it deprives others of the use of such materials.

Gandhi advocated an ecology that concerns itself with the interrelationship of living organisms, plants, animals or humans and their environments. Every form of development that alleviates the poverty of the masses should be in tune with nature. Gandhi believed that so long as humans cooperate with nature and help natural life cycle, the nature is benevolent to the requirements of the humans. He recognized the fact that human being is only a part of nature. So if s/he removes the part from the interrelationship then it will be self-

destructive. In fact, Gandhi, in his life, developed an affinity with plants[40] and animals[41] to the extent that he revered them.

Gandhi's environmentalism was based on various ethical principles that he promoted to attain his political, economic social and religious ideals. Some of these principles include truth, non-violence, non-stealing, non-possession, celibacy, bread-labour, hygiene, *Swadeshi*, control of the palate, simplicity, introspection, prayer, meditation and fasting. Through these, he controlled himself by himself, because,

40 Gandhi loved trees and did not make any adverse comments against tree worship. He wrote: "even so far from seeing anything inherently evil or harmful in tree worship, I find in it a thing instinct with a deep pathos and poetic beauty. It symbolises true reverence for the entire vegetable kingdom, which with its endless panorama of beautiful shapes and forms, declares to us as it were with a million tongues the greatness and glory of God. Without vegetation our planet would not be able to support life even for a moment. In such a country, especially, therefore, in which there is a scarcity of trees, tree worship assumes a profound economic significance." *Young India*, 26-09-1929. To show Gandhi's love and respect for plants, the following incident is in order. While imprisoned in Yeravda Jail together Kaka Kalelkar, one day Gandhi suffered from a bad toothache. One night, he asked his friend to collect some leaves of the margosa plant so that he could crush them and put it between the teeth in order to ease the pain. To his utter dismay, Kaka Kalelkar brought a large branch of the tree. Gandhi was moved to tears. He complained that when he wanted only four leaves why did Kaka bring the whole branch that too at night while the tree is sleeping.

41 Gandhi extended his non-violence to sub-human living species, especially the animals. He abstained from eating meat and avoided animal food in any form. Gandhi once observed that the greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated. To seek to reduce the suffering of those who are completely under one's domination and unable to fight back, is truly a mark of a civilized society. However, Gandhi was not fanatical. Once, with the approval of Gandhi, the Municipality killed some 60 stray dogs—some of them rabid. Gandhi received many angry letters accusing him of being violent. Gandhi in a series of articles in *Navajivan* and later in *Young India* explained the parameters of ahimsa in practice. "Taking life might be a duty under certain circumstances. Man destroyed plant life in order to sustain himself. He killed mosquitoes, and carnivorous beasts, which pestered villagers. Even a man who had gone mad and killed others needed to be killed. The fact is that ahimsa does not simply mean non-killing. *Himsa* means causing pain to or killing any life out of anger or for a selfish purpose, or with the intention of causing injury. Refraining from so doing is ahimsa." Sushila Nayar, *Mahatma Gandhi, Salt Satyagraha – The Watershed*, vol., 6 (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1995), 36.

being a yogi, he had complete control over his body and mind. He did not preach anything that he did not practise himself. Other ideals that he worked for were emancipation and empowerment of women, and the welfare of poorer sections of the society. All these ideals that he adopted for himself and for his followers ultimately gave him an internationally acclaimed acceptance as a great pacifist, a democrat, a defender of rights and privileges of downtrodden and of women, and an ardent advocate of environmental protection.

Conclusion

The significance of Gandhi as an environmentalist lies not in his vision and his right understanding of man-nature relationship, rather in his honest efforts to translate his precepts in actual life. His entire life can be viewed as an ecological treatise. His was one life in which every minute act, emotion or thought functioned much like an ecosystem: his small meals of nuts and fruits, his morning ablutions and everyday bodily practices, his periodic observances of silence, his morning walks, his cultivation of the small as much as of the big, his spinning wheel, his abhorrence of waste, his resorting to basic Hindu and Jain values of truth, nonviolence, celibacy and fasting were all exercised in tune with nature. He was able to motivate his followers to do the same. His Phoenix and Tolstoy Farms in South Africa can testify to it. His ashrams in India too bear the same trait. Although he eulogized the village life, it pained him to see the poverty, illiteracy and unsanitary conditions in Indian villages. Self-sufficiency of villages, promotion of small scale and cottage industries, control on the import of goods from outside, improvement in agricultural production, etc. are some of the ways that he envisaged in order to develop the villages. It is also important to note that the moralists, nonviolent activists, feminists, journalists, social reformers, trade union leaders, peasants, prohibitionists, nature-cure lovers and environmentalists take their inspiration from Gandhi's life and writings. Unfortunately, many of the environmentalists of today engage themselves in giving scholarly lectures and writing research papers and books on the subject. This does not mean that there are no environmentalists who are activists in their own right. Gandhi, as an activist, attempted to carry the message

to the masses through the very life that he lived. Hardly any political leader of his stature in the world had ever devoted so much of time and energy on these problems with so much sincerity and dedication. This is what made him an environmentalist with a difference.

GANDHI'S ECOLOGICAL VISION
Based on the Indian Religious Traditions

Henry Jose Kodikuthiyil, msfs[1]

Abstract: *Long before the ecological crisis was affecting the world, Mahatma Gandhi had brought out his ecological sensitivity through his writings. He was well aware of the unbridled use and abuse of nature. The present day ecological crisis is due to the exploitative and egoistic attitude of the humans. According to Gandhiji, nature has enough to satisfy everyone's needs, but not to satisfy anybody's greed. Gandhian vision of ecology has positively contributed to the present day management of the resources. His insistence on the reduction of our wants as well as promoting a simple lifestyle would serve as practical guiding principles of life. Today the world is ever more in need of an integral ecology that brings together a fresh understanding that people and the planet are part of one interdependent and interconnected community in the whole ecosystem. Every religion extols the significance of nature. Religions help to shape our attitudes toward nature in both conscious and unconscious ways. Religions do provide the basic interpretive stories of who we are, what nature is, where we have come from, and where we are going. Religions also suggest how we should treat other humans and how we should relate ourselves to nature. Mahatma Gandhi was open to all religions, and he drew inspirations and insights from various religious traditions. His ecological vision is an invitation to rediscover and develop a new wholeness and holiness, and at the same time remain fully sensitive, committed and completely involved with the world of today. Indian religious and spiritual traditions are*

1 This article is for a *Festschrift* in honour of Prof. Dr. Pushparajan, who has been a passionate ecologist and above all a true Gandhian in every sense of the term; I have been inspired to put down some of his ideas here.

highly ecological and anyone who is in communion with God cannot but be in communion with nature and thus be ecological too.

* * * * * * *

Introduction

Today, more than ever before, we experience a global catastrophe. The tsunami in Japan a few years ago and the nuclear disaster that followed, gigantic wildfires, unprecedented floods, unexpected heat waves and periods of draught, extreme cold waves in different parts of the world, are some of the tragedies that shook us very recently. In this context it is pertinent to ask: Who has to protect the earth: humans or God? Gandhiji's ecological vision is still relevant for us to have an introspection and ecological renewal today. This article is aimed at elaborating the ecological insights in the writings of Mahatma Gandhi and to establish that his ecological contribution is well within in the religious traditions of India.

1.Gandhian Vision of Development and Resource Management

Long before the ecological crisis was affecting the world, Gandhiji had brought out his ecological sensitivity through his writings already in 1909. His "Hind Swaraj Indian Home-Rule" testifies this attempt:

> For … industrial society was selfish, competitive, and grossly destructive of nature. The distinguishing characteristic of modern civilization was infinite multiplication of wants. To satisfy it, one has to forage far and wide for new materials and commodities. I wholeheartedly detest this mad desire to destroy distance and time to increase animal appetites and go to the ends of the earth in search of their satisfaction. If modern civilization stands for all this, and I have understood it so, I call it satanic.[2]

Gandhi was well aware of the unbridled use and abuse of nature. The present day ecological crisis is due to the exploitative and egoistic attitude of the humans. As he says:

2 M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj: India's Home Rule* (Ahemadabad: Navajeevan Publications, 1962), 61-62; as quoted in A. Pushparajan , "Relevance of Gandhian Eco-Vision, " *Journal of Dharma*, 31 (2006), 413.

> When we, through greed or false notions or a wrong sense proportion, interfere with nature hoping to obtain short-cuts, we generally end up by being wasteful. Nature does not believe in short-cuts. The mills of God grind slowly. Hence in our hurry, we often bring destruction on our heads and we imagine such quick results to be a sign of progress.[3]

Gandhi's idea that "nature has enough to satisfy every one's needs, but not to satisfy anybody's greed" became the one-line-ethic to modern environmentalism.[4] Once Gandhiji was asked if he would like to have the same standard of living for India's millions of people as was prevalent in England, he gave the following answer: "It took Britain half the resources of the planet to achieve this prosperity. How many planets will a country like India require!"[5]

Gandhian vision of ecology has positively contributed to the present day management of the resources. He insisted on the reduction of our wants as a practical guiding principle of life. Today people opt for a hi-fi lifestyle with all types of modern amenities. There is a crave for modern gadgets which forces people for a very luxurious living which tempt people to indulge in multiplication of wants. Unless we are cautiously aware of this, we may fall prey to it. Nature has produced materials sufficient enough to meet man's needs. But factory owners started exploiting nature in unnatural ways. Thereby they have created 'illth' in the place of 'wealth'... When money becomes the motive for practicing medicine, he is tempted to prolong his illness. The big industries also do the same. Instead of meeting our wants, they multiply our wants through various allurements such as big offers and advertisements. Just as children throw away old toys when they see new ones, so also the factory-owners tempt the people to throw away the old articles and get new ones. If we crave for more things than

3 *Harijan*, April 13, 1947, vol. XI, 104. As quoted in A. Pushparajan, "Relevance of Gandhian Eco-Vision," *Journal of Dharma*, 31 (2006), 413.

4 Sasikala A.S., "Environmental Thoughts of Gandhi for a Green Future," http://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/green_future.htm accessed on 7th August 2016.

5 As quoted in Khoshoo, T. N., *Mahatma Gandhi: An Apostle of Applied Human Ecology*, The Energy and Resources Institute. Kindle Edition, 20.

needed, we become slaves of the factory. There is no happiness in slavery. Our troubles increase in the same proportion as our wants.[6]

There is another guiding principle in Gandhi, namely his insistence on having a simple lifestyle. He says:

> Simplicity of life and the simplification of the machinery of living must be realized as a supremely essential condition of the coming of the new era. In the civilization of the future, an era of natural harmonious living will be inaugurated and artificial, luxurious and pompous living will be entirely rooted out. Simplicity of life being a condition of spiritual perfection, we may look forward to an era of civilization in the future, greatly superior to all the civilization of the past, if only we accept simplicity of life as the best method of living.[7]

Elsewhere he writes very emphatically that if we continue with the attitude of accumulating things we naturally become thieves because we fail to be sensitive to the needs of others.

> If I take anything that I do not need for my own immediate use and keep it, I thieve it from somebody else. I venture to suggest that it is the fundamental law of Nature, without exception, that Nature provides enough for our wants from day to day, and if only everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, there would be no pauperism in this world, there would be no man dying of starvation in this world.[8]

2. Gandhian Vision of Integral Ecology

Today the world is ever more in need of an integral ecology that brings together a fresh understanding that people and the planet are part of one interdependent and interconnected community in the whole ecosystem. We human beings are only a part of the entire Earth community and we need to protect and preserve the resources that are at our disposal. According to A. Pushparajan, the Gandhian eco-vision

6 A. Pushparajan , "Relevance of Gandhian Eco-Vision, " *Journal of Dharma*, 31 (2006), 421.

7 *Harijan*, 20.4.1922, vol. IV, 197. See also A. Pushparajan, "Relevance of Gandhian Eco-Vision," 422.

8 M. K. Gandhi, *From Yervada Mandir* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1932), 13-15. See also A. Pushparajan , "Relevance of Gandhian Eco-Vision," 422.

consists in seeing the environmental and the moral as one integrated whole. He brings out this vision of Gandhi as follows:

> This land of ours was once, we are told, the abode of the gods. It is not possible to conceive gods inhabiting a land which is made hideous by the smoke and the din of mill chimneys and factories and whose roadways are traversed by rushing engines, dragging numerous cars crowded with men who know not for the most part what they are after, who are often absent-minded, and whose tempers do not improve by being uncomfortably packed like sardines in boxes and finding themselves in the midst of utter strangers who would oust them if they could and whom they would, in their turn, oust similarly. I refer to these things because they are held to be symbolical of material progress. But they add not an atom to our happiness.[9]

Gandhiji further insisted on the necessity of integrating both modernization as well as focusing on the upkeep of spiritual values. He says:

> If India is to live and fulfill her spiritual mission among men, she must modernize itself... Let us unhesitatingly and energetically assimilate the modern industrial methods... But along with that we must practice spirituality intensely, create a mighty spiritual idealism in the mind of the nation and a great love for the country so that on the wings of them we may cross over the dark valley of modernism in which the west is sadly groping. Without spiritual idealism, modernism will spell a speedy ruin.[10]

Commenting on the evil effects of market economy and globalization on nature, Pushparajan is of the opinion that "Nature is considered merely as a pool of resources for profit making business or simply as an object to be utilized by humans. Nature is no more regarded a well-designed system of which we are only a part. We are what we are only because we are part of the system as a whole. We are taking nourishment from Mother Nature. If we cut ourselves away

9 Shriman Narayan, *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1968), 354-55; *Young India*, 25.7.1929, vol. XI, 244.

10 *Young India*, 25.7.1929, vol. XI, 244.

from Mother Nature and are keen on making profits at the cost of the copious provisions of Nature, then we are rootless and ruthless."[11]

3. Gandhian Eco-Vision and Indian Religious Traditions

Every religion extols the significance of nature. Religions help to shape our attitudes toward nature in both conscious and unconscious ways. Religions do provide basic interpretive stories of who we are, what nature is, where we have come from, and where we are going. Religions also suggest how we should treat other humans and how we should relate to nature.[12] Mahatma Gandhi was open to all religions and he drew inspirations and insights from various religious traditions. Now let us examine the ecological sensitivity or ecological consciousness in some of the most ancient Indian religious traditions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.

3.1. Hinduism

The Hindu scriptures especially the Vedas, the Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita state that no activity whether biological, natural, human or metaphysical can exist outside the sphere of the Earth. In the words of Dr. Karan Singh, "In the ancient spiritual traditions, man was looked upon as part of nature, linked by indissoluble spiritual and psychological bonds with elements around him. This is very much marked in the Hindu tradition, probably the oldest living religious tradition in the world. The Vedas, those collections of hymns composed by the great spiritual seers and thinkers which are the repository of Hindu wisdom, reflect the vibrancy of an encompassing world-view which looks upon all objects in the universe, living or non-living, as being pervaded by the same spiritual power."[13]

In the Atharva Veda (12, 1.1-63), we read about the Vedic attitude towards the Earth. The whole of the Ṛg veda reflects a religion of

11 A. Pushparajan, "Relevance of Gandhian Eco-Vision," *Journal of Dharma*, 31 (2006), 418-19.

12 Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155 (March 1967), 1204.

13 O.P. Dwivedi, ed., *World Religions and the Environment* (New Delhi: Gitanjali Publishing House, 1989), 327.

nature, where man is conceived as part and parcel of its natural dynamics. Vedic man was nature centred; for him, all natural phenomena arose from divine source. Behind the wide spectrum of gods and an immensely intricate ritual technology of the fire-sacrifice, there was an insight into the natural laws of nature. The ṛg veda resonates with hymns of praise to the deities of the sky, Earth and atmosphere, thunder, rain, sun and wind. In contrast, the Atharva Veda rings a new note. It affirms the life of man-in-the-world. The text contains incantations, magic spells and formulas either to bless or appease, or to curse, or often to safeguard the general well-being of the community.

The Atharva hymns, named after the fire-churning priest or *atharvan*, were devised to establish harmony in family and village life. Here the attention of the forest-dwelling seers has shifted, as it were, from the sky pervading nature gods to the life sustaining Earth. Vedic culture, as we know, was rooted in a very high degree of material comfort. Man's life was conceived as a harmonious unit. There was neither any pessimism nor any conflict between the pursuit of dharma, artha, kama and moksha. Life on Earth was considered a short sojourn or a stepping stone to higher life in other regions. From the fertile soil of this life affirming milieu sprang the most exalted vision of the real visible Earth, conceived as a nurturing mother of humankind.

The Earth on whom waters flow day and night, never ceasing motion—the Earth that is brown black and red in colour, a vast abode (Atharva Veda, 12.1.9a-11b). The Vedic hymns to the Prthivi (Earth Mother) cover a wide range of aspects: physical, organic, metaphysical, ethical and cosmic. Her (Earth's) body laced by rivers and rimmed by the Ocean is adorned with "gentle slopes and plains" (AV. 12.1.2). The Earth is composed of hills, "rock, stone and dust," and is compactly held. An essential feature of the Earth is her fragrance which pervades all the products of the Earth. The herbs, water, nymphs and celestial creatures bear it. Her fragrance enters the lotus and the flowers everywhere. The seer prays that this fragrance may enter him:

Instill in me abundantly that fragrance,
O Mother Earth, which emanates from you

Your fragrance which has entered the lotus
Where with the immortal Gods at the Sun—daughters wedding
were redolent, O Earth, in times primeval—
Instill in me that fragrance.
Your fragrance that adheres to human beings
O Earth, steep us, too deeply in that fragrance

(Atharva Veda, 12.1.23-26)

The entire universe is the body of the supreme Atman:
Fire is his head, his eyes are the sun and the moon,
The regions of space are his ears, his speech the revealed Vedas,
Air is his life and his heart the world.
Out of his feet the Earth is born
Indeed he is the Self of all beings (Sarva-bhutantaratma)

(Mundaka Upanishad 2,1,4).

As a tree is born of the Earth, lives through the Earth and finally returns to the Earth, the entire realm of beings has the *Atman* as their Ground of being:

That from which beings are born,
That by which, when born, they live,
That into which, when dying, they enter,
That you should desire to know:
That is Brahman.

(Taittiriya Upanishad 3,1)

The one who sees all beings in the Atman
And the Atman in all beings is free from fear.

(Isa Upanishad, 6)

Further, in the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad we see that Brahman is the inner Controller of all and that all things form the body of Brahman. "He who dwells in the Earth and is within it, but whom the Earth does not know, whose body is the Earth and who controls the Earth within,

He is the inner Controller: He is your Self, the Immortal."[14] According to the Bhagavad Gita, the entire universe is seen as the 'body of the Lord' (13,14; 11,10-11); the Lord permeates all beings (9,4; 11,38); He is their life-giving source (15,4; 10,8), the imperishable seed (7,10; 9,18), the ground and abode (9,4; 8,9; 11,18), the Light within (10,11; 13,18), the ultimate goal of all (9,10; 8,21; 10,20). In nature the Lord is the fertility power in the Earth (15,13), flavour in water (7,8), glance in fire (7,9), source of all life (7,7) and the divine vibration in space (8,13; 10,25). The Lord warms the Earth with the sun (15,12), fertilizes the Earth through rain (9,19; 15,13) and enlivens everything as the root keeps the tree alive (15,1). The lord is at work in the universe bringing about harmony (7,7) and integration (4,8). Human beings are therefore called upon to participate in this divine work of keeping all beings in life and harmony. The motivation for *karma yoga* is the 'integration of world' (*lokasamgraha*, 3, 25) and even more, 'a passionate concern for the well-being of all things in nature' (*sarvabhutahiteratah*, 12,4; 5,25). Thus Gita speaks of the responsibility towards the protection of the natural environment.[15]

3.2. Buddhism

Buddhism emphasized the equal sanctity of all beings. Buddha preached an ethic of universal harmony (*dhamma*) which embraces not only the human world but the entire realm of beings. He stressed the need for universal love and advocated abstinence from actions that harmed fellow beings. Giving the example of a mother, Buddha said: "As she would be very good towards her only child, her well-beloved son, so too ye should be very good towards all creatures everywhere and everyone."[16] Throughout the history of Buddhism,

14 Brhadaranyaka Upanisad, 3.73. Ramanuja developed his concept of God in similar vein: God as the Self of all entities and all entities as the attributive body of God. See Augustine Thottakara, "Eco-Dynamics of Religion: A Vedantic Perspective," in *Eco-dynamics of Religion: Thoughts for the Third Millennium*, ed., Augustine Thottakara (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2000), 87.

15 Henry Jose Kodikuthiyil, "Ecological Pluralism: Emerging Trends," in *Pluralism of Pluralism: A Pluralistic Probe into Philosophizing*, ed., Puthenpurackal, Johnson J. (Bangalore: ATC, 2006), 161.

16 S.S. Tripathi and Acharya Bhante, "Buddhism and Ecological Crisis," in *World Religions and the Environment*, ed., O.P. Dwivedi (New Delhi: Gitanjali Publishing House, 1989), 192.

concern for the welfare of the natural world has been an important element. Recognition that human beings are essentially dependent upon and inter connected with their environments has given rise to an instinctive respect for nature.[17] For the Buddhists, taking care of the planet is nothing special, nothing sacred or holy. It's just like taking care of our own house. A person endowed with compassion (*Karuṇa*) does not look at other beings as separate entities or selves but as parts of his own being which is in constant becoming. According to Buddhist doctrine everything in the universe is literally dependent upon everything else. Nothing stands alone; everything is linked together through time and space.

Trees and plants have a very important place in the social life of India as well as in the other countries where Buddhism is practiced. Buddha was born under the blossomy grove of Asoka and Sala trees, obtained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, and preached his first sermon under the tree. Thus, trees and groves are the most pious and inspiring objects for the Bhikkhus in order to contemplate the problems related to the goodness of humanity.[18]

The rivers, forests, grass, creepers, herbs, mountains, and night are highly respected and regarded as bliss bestowers. The sun, moon, fire and the planets were given great respect by the Buddhist thinkers.

Like the lotus-flower, wearing garlands of asterion,

O Night!
I pay my respect to you
And in the absence of Rajaputra seek shelter of yours.
May Soma, Varma, Prajapati;
May the Moon and Sun bestow bliss on you.
Thus under their blissful protection
You will go and return with safety.
O Grasses, Creepers, Herbs, Mountains and Woods!

17 Martine Batchelor and Kerry Brown, eds., *Buddhism and Ecology* (London: Cassell, 1992), 12.

18 S.S. Tripathi and Acharya Bhante, "Buddhism and Ecological Crisis," 201-02.

I seek shelter of you in the absence of Rajaputra.
O Bhagirathi Ganga the Acceptor of all the Rivers!
I pay my respect
And in the absence of Rajaputra
Seek shelter of yours.
O Himalaya, the King of Mountains,
Bearing high-summits!
I pay my respect to you,
And in the absence of Rajaputra seek shelter of yours.[19]

The natural environment, uninhabited by humanity, was also respected as the ideal place for cultivating spiritual insights. Dwelling in nature was clearly preferable for Shantideva to life in a monastery or town.

When shall I come to dwell in forests
Amongst the deer, the birds and the trees,
That say nothing unpleasant
And are delightful to associate with?[20]

Thus Buddhism, in its very essence, can be described as an ecological religion or a religious ecology.[21]

3.3. Jainism

Environmentalists often suggest that Jainism epitomizes ecological religion, since Jains embrace vegetarianism, and practice *ahimsa* (nonviolence) towards all beings, including plants, microbes, and even earth, air, and water. Jaina religion is called the Religion of *ahimsa* par excellence. Its scriptures and traditions subscribe to the doctrine of *ahimsa*.[22] *Ahimsa* means non-killing, non-violence, harmlessness. This doctrine of Ahimsa is based on the belief of the unity of all life, human, animal, plant and even atoms of matter. Liberation or

19 As quoted in S.S. Tripathi and Acharya Bhante, "Buddhism and Ecological Crisis," 203.
20 Martine Batchelor and Kerry Brown, eds., *Buddhism and Ecology*, 13.
21 Ibid., viii.
22 Vincent Sekhar, "Implications of Ahimsa on Ecology: A Jaina Perspective," *Jain Journal* 28 (1993), 94.

salvation, according to Jainism, belongs to the whole universe, the animal, vegetative and the human kingdom. Jaina understanding of Life Force (*Jiva*) suggests that all living beings have the inherent spiritual capacity to Transcendence. Jainism aims at the integral salvation of the whole universe including the animal kingdom and vegetative life. Hence it advocates the avoidance of any injury to living beings, because an injury done to any living creature hampers one's own progress towards the ultimate goal of life.[23]

From the earliest extant text of the tradition, one learns that Jaina monks and nuns were keen observers of the elements and the living beings of the natural world. The *Ācarānga Sūtra*, which dates from the fourth or fifth century before the Common Era, indicates that Mahāvīra (c. 500 BCE), who established Jainism in its current institutional form, was a keen observer of nature. The text states that "thoroughly knowing the earth-bodies and water-bodies and fire-bodies and wind-bodies, the lichens, seeds, and sprouts, he comprehended that they are, if narrowly inspected, imbued with life."[24] The life force exists in the four elements of earth, water, fire, and air as well as in microorganisms, plants, and animals. At the point of death, this life-force moves from one body to the next, depending on its karmic constitution. The life force attached to earth-body moves very slowly, whereas the life force found in an insect or microorganism might move on very quickly.

Jainism widens the moral circle to include all living beings including plants, contending that all living beings have souls and are of infinite value. For the Jains, this earth with its multitude of life-forms and atoms is the only true sphere of meaning, the place of dreams, of actions, of moral and aesthetic culmination. They call it *Jivanmukta*, the divine on earth. To this end, with rigorous ascetic practices, the Jains pursue the path of ahimsa, or non-injury, in their relations to each and every living being. Mahavira had stated, 'All breathing, existing, living, sentient creatures should not be slain, nor treated with violence, nor abused, nor tormented, nor away. This is the pure unchangeable external law.' Whereby Jains forbade occupations to

23 Ibid., 93.

24 As quoted in Henry Jose Kodikuthiyil, "Ecological Pluralism: Emerging Trends," 164.

their followers that would involve taking life, not only hunting and butchery, but also agriculture, lest in digging the ground some animal or insect life be taken. Jain ecology is thus a process of focusing on nature through the practices of restraint, meditation, and action. This inner attentiveness then blossoms into an embrace of the life-principle which is the Earth and all of its inter-related beings. The heart of Jainism is thus about stewardship, requiring human diligence, human conscience, and human love.[25]

4. Gandhian Eco-Vision and Pope Francis' *Laudato Sí*

Like Gandhi, Pope Francis is a staunch protagonist and defender of integral ecology. Referring to St Francis of Assisi, the patron of ecology, in his encyclical[26] on care for our common home, Pope Francis says,

> Francis helps us to see that an integral ecology calls for openness to categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology, and take us to the heart of what it is to be human. Just as happens when we fall in love with someone, whenever he would gaze at the sun, the moon or the smallest of animals, he burst into song, drawing all other creatures into his praise. He communed with all creation, even preaching to the flowers, inviting them "to praise the Lord, just as if they were endowed with reason." His response to the world around him was so much more than intellectual appreciation or economic calculus, for to him each and every creature was a sister united to him by bonds of affection. That is why he felt called to care for all that exists.[27]

The encyclical offers a unified discourse about the crisis of our common home and the plight of its commonwealth of species and of the common human family inhabiting it, with special focus on the

25 I. Samuel Longkumer, "Ecological Sensitivity in Indian Religions," *Theology for our Times* 6 (1999), 90-91.

26 *Laudato Si'* covers a wide range of issues spanning from climate change to creation theology. For an excellent commentary on the encyclical, see Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam, *Rebuilding Our Common Home: Ten Green Commandments of Laudato Si'* (Bengaluru, Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2016).

27 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, No. 11.

implications for the most vulnerable.[28] The integral approach of Pope Francis is very well articulated in the encyclical. As he writes:

> The specialization which belongs to technology makes it difficult to see the larger picture. The fragmentation of knowledge proves helpful for concrete applications, and yet it often leads to a loss of appreciation for the whole, for the relationships between things, and for the broader horizon, which then becomes irrelevant. This very fact makes it hard to find adequate ways of solving the more complex problems of today's world, particularly those regarding the environment and the poor; these problems cannot be dealt with from a single perspective or from a single set of interests. A science which would offer solutions to the great issues would necessarily have to take into account the data generated by other fields of knowledge, including philosophy and social ethics; but this is a difficult habit to acquire today. Nor are there genuine ethical horizons to which one can appeal. Life gradually becomes a surrender to situations conditioned by technology, itself viewed as the principal key to the meaning of existence. In the concrete situation confronting us, there are a number of symptoms which point to what is wrong, such as environmental degradation, anxiety, loss of the purpose of life and of community living.[29]

In chapter four of *Laudato Sí* Pope Francis gives a description of Integral Ecology: "Since everything is closely interrelated, and today's problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis, I suggest that we now consider some elements of an *integral ecology*, one which clearly respects its human and social dimensions."[30]

In the vision of Pope Francis there are five aspects of it. They are: a) Environmental, economic and social ecology,[31] b) Cultural ecology,[32]

28 Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam, *Rebuilding Our Common Home: Ten Green Commandments of Laudato Si*', 150.

29 *Laudato Si*, No.110.

30 *Laudato Si*, No.137.

31 See *Laudato Si*, Nos, 138-142.

32 See *Laudato Si*, Nos, 143-146.

c) Ecology of daily life[33] d) The principle of the common good,[34] e) Justice between the generations.[35] According to him, "Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*."[36] Furthermore in *Laudato Sí* Pope Francis's ecological vision has a dialogical and all inclusive approach, integrating insights from various traditions, schools of thought, and individuals. One can notice that he attempts to make a synthesis of what Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI as well as other religious leaders, local bishops' conferences, scientists, philosophers, theologians, sociologists, and other leaders have said on ecological crisis and how we care for the nature. He also takes insights from a wide range of sources, from the Patriarch Bartholomew to the Sufi mystic Ali al-Khawas, from Dante to Teilhard de Chardin.[37]

Conclusion

In today's globalized world, ecological consciousness or sensitivity permeates every sphere of life. Gandhi's ecological vision is a clarion call for a deeper commitment to protect and preserve nature. It is a commitment to the sanctity of life, a commitment to unity irrespective of caste, creed and nationality. The need of the hour today is an enhanced consciousness about the deteriorating environment. Gandhian ecological vision, thus, promotes and fosters *Ecocentricity* rather than *Egocentricity*. It is an invitation to rediscover and develop a new wholeness and holiness, and at the same time remain fully sensitive, committed and completely involved with the world of today. Indian religious and spiritual traditions are highly ecological and anyone who is in communion with God cannot but be in communion with nature and thus be ecological too!

33 See *Laudato Si*, Nos, 147-155.
34 See *Laudato Si*, Nos, 156-158.
35 See *Laudato Si*, Nos, 159-162.
36 *Laudato Si*, No. 49.
37 Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam, *Rebuilding Our Common Home: Ten Green Commandments of Laudato Si*', 157.

SUSTAINING GLOBAL HOME THROUGH VOLUNTARY POVERTY
Gandhian Strategies

Nithiya Sagayam, ofmcap

Abstract: *Under Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation the sense of the Global home is lost. Gandhi perceived this trend in early 19th century and proposed voluntary renunciation of materials and non materials as a way of life. Gandhi bases his argument that everything belongs to God and all goods of the earth belong to all people. Hence in Gandhi's view any exclusive possession would be a theft. He said that anything more than one's need is stealing from the needy. If everyone retains possession only to his requirements, no one would be wanting and all would live in contentment. We can protect the Global Home if people are led not by greed but by need. In a welfare-society one cannot be enslaved by the welfare of the machines or consumerism, but rather one becomes other-centred, swadeshi. Thus Gandhi Proposes production by masses, rather than mass production, eco-friendly life rather than economy-friendly life.*

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India is proud of its fast economic growth. But on the other hand 35% of her people live below poverty line. The socio economic and cultural welfare of India on the whole consists in the holistic development of every individual. True welfare society consists in the welfare of all people. But this welfare strategy must begin with the welfare of the least, the *Antyodaya* in the society. This is the dream of Gandhian vision of the global home.

Today, individual and institutional greed leading to amassing wealth through hook or crook has become the norm of the day. India is known for the acute discriminations based on caste, gender, creed etc. There is also a great neglect of rural growth at the cost of urban development, militarisation at the cost of necessities of life. The unmonitored patterns of low wages, under-employment, exploitation of migrants, unorganised labourers, insecure life of women, indifference to the poor in every level, lack of proper education in rural areas and slums, corruption in politics, exploitation in economics, discriminations in social life are spread out in every sphere. Under liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation the sense of the sacred for the individual and society has gone away. Gandhi perceived this trend in early 19th century and he responded to this with his vision of the global home, in his book "Self Rule." His life was not only a search for an experiment with Truth in the sense of speaking the truth but the truth about socio economic, ecological, cultural and political life at large. Thus he proposed principles for both individual and collective life. The strategies that Gandhi proposed stand for his vision for protecting the Global Home.

1. Vision for Global Home through Personal Change of Lifestyle

There are several ways of focusing on the welfare of Global Home. Serving the whole creation, protecting and sustaining are of great value. One of the core issues that leads to the degradation of nature is personal greed. Gandhi focused on this in his personal and social life.

1.1. Voluntary Poverty, a Normative Principle

Gandhi held *Truth* as the goal of his life and non-violence as the means to achieve this goal. But what is less known is that these basic principles would not have satisfactorily been lived by Gandhi had he been a lover of personal possessions. In other words, Gandhi's pursuit of Truth and his mission both in Africa and in India were successful because of his life of detachment. He was very much detached from his personal belongings, advantages, name and fame, and the future of his family. In short, his whole life was governed by the norm of voluntary poverty.

Gandhi had set up this norm of voluntary poverty as an ideal not only for his personal life but also for others. According to V.P. Varma, Gandhi seemed to have conceived voluntary poverty as an ethical criterion that was to govern the lives of all people.[1] It demands an attitudinal change towards the rest of God's creation. J.O. Awino opines that when one adopts the attitude of *aparigraha* it includes love and justice.[2] Ranji Bala Sharma states that non-observance of the principle of voluntary poverty leads on the one hand to the collection and wastage of goods by the rich few, and on the other, to the starvation of the millions.[3]

Gandhi evolved a golden rule for the reduction of possession: "Resolutely refuse to have what the millions cannot."[4] He took this norm in utmost seriousness and practised it in its fullness. This norm transformed him into a 'man in rags.' The grinding poverty of the masses compelled him to say that no one should have more than one needs for dignified sustenance.[5] For his *ashramites* reduction of wants and adoption of the norm of voluntary poverty were obligatory. Gandhi proposed this norm not only in view of social motives but also on the basis of personal spiritual experience. Hence he was convinced that voluntary poverty is the norm to be followed if the soul were to experience its true identity: 'to attain the state of Brahman,'[6] Gandhi named this experience a "state beyond happiness and misery, where the man who sheds all longing and moves without concern, free from the sense of 'I' and 'mine' attains peace."[7]

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1 Cf., V.P. Varma, *The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and Sarvodaya* (Agra: Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, 1972), 80-83.

2 Cf., J.O. Awino, "The Concept of *Aparigraha* in *Bhagavad Gita* and its Relevance for the Third World," *Indian Theological Studies*, 33 (1996), 151.

3 Cf., R.B. Sharma, *Gandhi's World-view and Industrialisation* (Jaipur: Printwell Publishers, 1998), 122.

4 *Young India*, 24 October, 1926.

5 Cf., "Letter to Narandas Gandhi," in *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vols. I-III, ed., Iyer, R. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986-1987), 473-74. Hereafter referred to as *MPWMG*, III.

6 *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi,* hereafter referred as *CWMG*, (100 Vols.) (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1958-1994), vol. XLI, p.128.

7 Ibid*.,* 105.

1.2. Voluntary Poverty, the Richest Treasure

One may attribute to voluntary poverty purely a negative connotation as an option by which one is deprived of material possession. But Gandhi attributes to it a very positive meaning. He was convinced that voluntary poverty was an advantage; it offered him great wealth to be dispossessed of property even though people might mock at his dispossession.

> I own no property and yet I feel I am perhaps the richest man in the world ... For me dispossession has been a positive gain. I would like people to compete with me in my contentment. It is the richest treasure I own. Hence it is perhaps right to say that, though I preach poverty, I am a rich man.[8]

Gandhi tried to bring out the positive dimension of voluntary poverty. The attitude of voluntary poverty promotes happiness and contentment in life and increases the capacity for service.[9] Gandhi advocated the principle of renunciation: "Renunciation is true enjoyment."[10] It liberates one from the clutches of greed and materialism and imparts greater freedom in handling worldly matters. Hence as a reflection on the *Isha Upanishad* he advises, "Renounce all and all is yours."[11]

Through renunciation Gandhi experienced much freedom and ease in dealing with others. It enabled him to be one with the poor, sharing their lot. In a letter to Narandas Gandhi he wrote that if people really try they can reduce their wants; and as the latter diminish, they become happier, more peaceful and healthier. Hence he advised the rich to take initiative in dispossession, with a view of universal diffusion of the spirit of contentment.[12]

Gandhi reminds us that it is not an easy task. "To possess nothing is at first, not like taking your clothes off from your body, but like taking your flesh off your bones."[13] However by gradual reduction of wants

8 *Young India*, 30 April, 1925, *CWMG*, XXVI, 561-62.
9 *Letter to Narandas Gandhi*, *MPWMG,* III, 474.
10 *A Thought for a Day*, *CWMG*, vol. LXXXIII, 408.
11 Cf., R.Iyer, *MPWMG,* vol. II, 634.
12 Cf., *Letter to Narandas Gandhi*, *MPWMG*, vol. III, 474.
13 Cited in S. Radhakrishnan (ed.), *Mahatma Gandhi. Essays and Reflections*, 264., *CWMG,* vol. XLVIII, 52f.

and minimization of consumption, and "by standing above the world and worldly things, we can enjoy real happiness of the spirit and real freedom of the children of God."[14] The possession of anything then becomes a troublesome thing and a burden.[15] Gandhi wrote about it to Das Gupta: "Any little possession that we may keep would then be irksome. We would recognize it as our limitation and not as our right. And so if suddenly we are deprived of it, we should feel as if so much burden was taken off our shoulders."[16]

Gandhi held that perfect fulfillment of the ideal of voluntary poverty requires that man like birds, should have no roof over his head, no clothing, and no stock of food for the morrow... and it is God's business and not his to provide them.[17] While explaining his gradual development towards a life of voluntary poverty, Gandhi said, "… and, then, I said to myself... I can only possess certain thing, when I know that others, who also want to possess similar things, are able to do so. But we know—every one of us can speak from experience—such a thing is an impossibility. Therefore, the only thing that can be possessed by all is non-possession."[18]

Gandhi convinced people of the power of voluntary poverty by the example of those who had attained the ideal: "Those who followed the vow of voluntary poverty testify that when you dispossess yourself of everything you have, you really possess all the treasures of the world. In other words, you really get all that is in reality necessary for you, everything. If food is necessary, food will come to you."[19]

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14 Cf., A. Samy, "Renunciation in Gita and Gandhi's *Anasaktiyoga*," in *Gandhian Spirituality*, ed., A. Thottakara, (Rome: CIIS, 1992), 42.

15 Cf., R.K. Prabhu, & U. R. Rao, ed., *The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi*, hereafter referred as *MMG.* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1967), 187.

16 Letter to Chatis Chandra Das Gupta, (17 August, 1926), *CWMG*, vol. XXXI, 305.

17 Cf., M.K. Gandhi, *Hindu Dharma,* Ahmedabad, 1950.

18 At a talk given at Guild House Church in London, on 23rd Sep. 1931, the subject was 'Voluntary Poverty.' Surprisingly, the meeting was held under the auspices of the Franciscan Society. *CWMG*. vol., XLVIII, 52.

19 Cf. M.K. Gandhi, *My Theory of Trusteeship,* ed., Anand T. Hingorani (Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1970).

He proposed a life of Voluntary Poverty for all, as the solution to the distress in the world and said, "I feel that the world would not go all wrong, would not become a world of idiots, if all of us took a vow of voluntary poverty... It is not an impossible thing."[20] Love and exclusive possession can never go together. Theoretically, that there must be perfect voluntary poverty where there is perfect love will seem an unattainable ideal as long as we are alive, which ideal we must ceaselessly strive for.[21] Gandhi advocated that every man must dispossess his properties after a certain time, and he considered saving for the future of one's children an injustice[22] and hence to be stopped. In this respect he also asked, "Why should the father tempt his son by burdening him with ownership of property?"[23] For Gandhi, voluntary poverty goes beyond material dispossession. He considered that every unnecessary thought betrayed the ideals of voluntary poverty.

Gandhi proposed voluntary reduction of wants as an expression of voluntary poverty. "He who can do without chairs will not keep these in his house. The seeker will deliberately and voluntarily reduce his wants and cultivate progressively simple habits."[24]

1.3. Personal Possession as Theft

It was not enough that we consider voluntary poverty a rich treasure in view of contentment. In Gandhi's view, one is also led to the realisation that possession could be a theft. Both possessions and use are challenged. One of the *Mantras* of the *Isha Upanishad* is: "Do not covet what belongs to another."[25] The seers of the *Isha Upanishad* gave this teaching of non-possession to crown all other ideals as well as a warning against coveting others' possessions.[26] Gandhi's idea of not coveting others' wealth or non-stealing (*asteya*) is closely connected to the life of voluntary poverty that he envisioned and practiced.

20 *CWMG*., vol. XLVIII, 56.
21 An interview to Nirmal Kumar Bose on 9, Nov. 1934, *Hindustan Times,* 17.10.1935.
22 Cf., Kaka Saheb Kalelkar, *Stray Glimpses of Bapu,* (Ahmedabad: 1980).
23 *Young India*, 3-7-1924., *CWMG*., vol. XXIV, 345.
24 Ibid.
25 *Speech at Haripad*, *CWMG*, vol. LXIV, 264.
26 Cf., *Speech at Kottarakkara*, *CWMG*, vol. LXIV, 304.

According to Gandhi non-stealing (*asteya*) had much deeper significance than had been commonly understood. Theft includes, according to him, not only taking of another's possession; it covers a wide spectrum of other acts too: appropriating something in the belief that it is nobody's property, receiving something which one does not need, improper multiplication of one's wants, bothering about things to be acquired in the future, plagiarism, etc. All these deeds are to be understood as stealing and run counter to the ideal of voluntary poverty.[27]

The possession of goods beyond the limits of need is also a form of theft and therefore immoral. He said, "Anything that we possess without needing it would also be considered theft."[28] He felt that the rich have a superfluous store of things which they do not need and which are, therefore, neglected and wasted, while millions starve to death for want of sustenance. Through this explanation, Gandhi seems to give a harsh but prophetic statement that in our society, where millions starve, every rich person is certainly a thief. According to Gandhi, if everyone retains possession only to his requirements, no one would be wanting and all would live in contentment.[29]

Taking possession of another's property, even with his/her permission, is also a kind of thieving when that thing is not needed. Gandhi explained, "We are not always aware of our real wants, and most of us improperly multiply our wants and thus unconsciously make thieves of ourselves. If we devote some thought to the subject we shall find that we can get rid of quite a number of our wants."[30]

It would be theft to use a thing for a purpose different from the one intended by the lender or to use it for a period longer than that which has been fixed with him. Whoever appropriates more than the minimum that is really necessary is guilty of theft. Gandhi has said that Nature provides just enough, and no more, for our daily need, is the principle

27 Cf., *Ashram Observances in Action*, *CWMG,* vol. L, 213-14.
28 Ibid.
29 Cf., *CWMG*, vol. L, 215.
30 *From Yeravda Mandir*, 19 August, 1930; R. Iyer (ed.), *MPWMG,* vol. III, 471.

behind it.[31] Hence nobody should keep anything superfluous. Here we may think of the right of all to share the resources of nature and equitable distribution of wealth and eradication of poverty. Gandhi considered that much of the distressing poverty in the world has arisen out of breach of the principle of non-stealing,[32] or his due to the acquisitive tendency of humans. It would be theft even if one only uses more than daily needs warrant.

2. Social Dimensions of Voluntary Poverty to Protect Global Home

In the foregone section, Gandhi's concept of voluntary poverty was seen as a normative principle for personal and social life. Apart from the negative approach to voluntary poverty as a deprivation, we have observed its positive orientation as the rich treasure. Various ways of owning and misusing of things go against the ideal of voluntary poverty. According to the mind of Gandhi, such an approach is regarded as theft. With these understandings of poverty, let us go further to consider the social ethics of voluntary poverty basing on the ideals of *Sarvodaya*, *swadeshi*, trusteeship and bread labour.

2.1. Sarvodaya, the Welfare of All as the Outcome of Detachment

The ideal of *Sarvodaya* reflected Gandhi's longing for a harmonious society in which the welfare of all is sought. The Sanskrit word *sarvodaya* is coined from *sarva* (all) and *udaya* (rise, prosperity, affluence). Gandhi employed this word to express the thoughts contained in Ruskin's *Unto This Last* that proposed that the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.[33] One cannot dedicate oneself to the welfare of all unless one is freed from selfish motives, ambitions, personal agendas and greed. The *sarvodaya* ideal can be realized only through altruism. Hence true detachment forms the basis of *sarvodaya*.

31 Cf., Young *India*, 14 June, 1928; R. Iyer (ed.), *MPWMG*, vol. II, 237.

32 *MPWMG,* vol. III, 471.

33 Cf. Gandhi, M. K., *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, trans., Mahadev Desai, (Boston: Beacon Paperback Edition, 1957), 250. Hereafter referred to as *An Autobiography*.

One who is freed from the clutches of Ego reaches out to others. Hence one's domain is not confined only to one's family, relatives, and friends; seeks rather the goodness and happiness of all. This "all" does not only refer to humanity but also embraces the whole domain of being—both animate and inanimate—sentient and non-sentient. Voluntary poverty frees one to embrace the whole universe without any barrier. Gandhi could exercise his freedom due to the detached life rooted in voluntary poverty that he led. In fact it is this inner freedom resulting from detachment that enabled Gandhi to seek the welfare of all and led him to consider even the opponent as a friend.[34] The goal of *sarvodaya* is the well-being of all, which surpasses the utilitarian ideal of "the greatest happiness of the greatest number." Referring to this Gandhi said, "I do not believe in the greatest good of the greatest number... The only real, dignified, human doctrine is the greatest good of all, and this can be achieved only by uttermost self-sacrifice."[35] And self-sacrifice is not possible without detachment. In the *sarvodaya* welfare state, the members who are truly detached live in deep concern for each other. Thus the poor and the marginalized who suffer from material wants and who lack basic human dignity are cared for.[36]

Sarvodaya was Gandhi's vision for the future of India. In *sarvodaya* society, there would be no possessiveness in the life and attitude of its members. This results in new relationships: each would live for the welfare of all and all would be for the welfare of everyone. It is not money or wealth but a person who plays the central role in society. In such a society where there is neither greed nor avarice, voluntary poverty runs into the mainstream of the socio-economic life, paving

34 Before leaving South Africa, he sent to General Smuts a pair of leather sandals, which he made while he was in the prison, as a gesture of friendship. Twenty five years later, in 1939, General Smuts wrote of Gandhi, "…he never lost his temper or succumbed to hate, and preserved his gentle humour in the most trying situations. … Gandhi showed a new technique…" Cf., *Gandhi: His Life and Message for the World,* 48-49.

35 Desai, *The Diary of Mahadev Desai* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1948), 149.

36 Cf., V.P. Varma, *The Political Philosophy of Gandhi and Sarvodaya* (Agra: Lekshmi Narain Agarwal, 1972), 355-56.

way for peace, harmony and justice. Hence *sarvodaya* society based on detachment paves the way for a new social order which would be non-violent and non greedy.

2.2. Swadeshi, the Concern of Neighbourliness as an Effect of Voluntary Poverty

According to Gandhi the technological worldview furnished by the industrial revolution had distorted human relationships towards material things. As a result the material world and nature has become the locus of insatiable greed and unbridled exploitation. Gandhi's idea of *swadeshi,* based on voluntary poverty, promotes a sustainable relationship with one's neighbour. It frees one from slavery and greed. Against the background of modern, cut-throat-competition economics and industrialization, the principle of *swadeshi* proposes a non-violent economy based on production for the immediate neighbour.[37] Hence Gandhi said that *swadeshi* in its purest form is the highest altruism and universal service. *Swadeshi* is, in short, centred on the welfare of the neighbour and implies a special concern for the least, *Antyodaya.* This concern would lead us to prefer products produced by the poor and thus to help ensure their sustenance.

A voluntarily poor person would make a deliberate choice in view of the welfare of the poor neighbour, while the greedy person would avoid the poor neighbour by preferring foreign materials. Thus voluntary poverty helps one to follow the principle of *swadeshi*. In this way Gandhi's proposal of *swadeshi* could be attributed to his adherence to voluntary poverty. He was convinced that avoidance of *swadeshi* principle was equal to the neglect of the poor and their dignity.

2.3. Welfare of Person vs. Machine

Gandhi raised his prophetic voice against those factors that diminished the human dignity of persons.[38] One of the issues in this area was the

37 S.N. Agarwal, *The Gandhian plan of Economic Development*, (Bombay: Padma Publications, 1944), 23.

38 Cf., R. Diwan and M. Lutz, (eds.), "Total Revolution and Appropriate Technology," *Essays in Gandhian Economics* (New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1985), 177-78.

preference of machines to persons in the development of economy. Industrialization, big machines, fast production and mass production, etc., sound excellent only in terms of multiplication of money in the hands of the rich owner. One fails to think of the thousands who go jobless in this model. In short, the use of machines in the midst of availability of many hands is born out of greed. Though mechanization saves time and labour, the replacement of man by machines leaves thousands of "living machines" unemployed.[39] Gandhi says:

> What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. Men go on saving labour, till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation... My objection comes in when such machinery displaces human labour without providing displaced hands with a substitute at least as good as displaced labour.[40]

Voluntary poverty is centred on the welfare of the society while big machines and industrialization are based on the welfare of the few, rich land owners and capitalists. The welfare of a society is based on the welfare of all and not of the few. Much of the organization of machinery of the present age caters to but the few.[41] Gandhi was convinced that the concentration on machines in the Indian context comes out of greed and not need: "Today machinery merely helps a few to ride on the backs of millions. The impetus behind it is not the philanthropy to save labour, but greed."[42]

For Gandhi the supreme consideration was person. The application of machinery should not tend to atrophy the limbs of a person.[43] And he was not against machinery as such but its diminution of the human person.[44] Gandhi felt that the machine-age aimed to convert men into machines. Therefore he said, "It is beneath human dignity to lose one's individuality and become a mere cog in the machine."[45]

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39 *Harijan*, 2 November, 1934; R. Iyer (ed.), *MPWMG*, III, 523.
40 Ibid., 524.
41 Cf., *Young India*, 17 November, 1925; Cf. *MMG*, 238.
42 *Young India*, 13 November, 1924; *CWMG*, XXV, 251.
43 Ibid., 234.
44 *Harijan*, 27 February, 1937; *CWMG*, LXIV, 118.
45 *Harijan*, 28 January, 1939; cf., *MMG,* 241.

In a mechanized society persons are considered as slaves to machines. In such a situation, those who are in the big industries are also in trouble. E. F. Schumacher says that a great part of the modern neurosis may be due to this fact.[46] Gandhi feared that industrialization would be a curse for humankind.[47] Referring to the domination of machines on people Gandhi wrote, "While this machine-age aims at converting men into machines, I am aiming at reinstating man turned machine into his original state."[48] He supported small-scale industries in view of the welfare of the majority who were poor. India which has a huge population needs to employ many millions of people. Machinery has its place. But it must not be allowed to displace necessary human labour.[49]

Gandhi was convinced that the tendency to prefer machines to persons comes out of the greed of the rich. The ideal of voluntary poverty leads one to concentrate on the welfare of all, especially the needy who are the majority. Any economic programme must therefore be oriented towards their welfare.

3. Protecting Global Home through Eco-Justice

Welfare of society includes people as well as nature. Hence the ideal of voluntary poverty paves way for the establishment of eco-justice through a life of integration with the whole creation. Voluntary poverty helps one to live in tune with nature. Ecological living does not imply turning away from economic progress; rather it seeks to discover which technologies are most appropriate and helpful in moving toward a sustainable future. Ecological living is not a path of "no growth" but a path of "new growth" that includes both material and spiritual dimensions of life. A simpler way of life is not a retreat from progress; in fact it is essential to the advance of civilisations.[50]

46 E. F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful*, (London: Abacus, Sphere Book Ltd., 1975), 158.
47 Cf., *Young India*, 12 November, 1931; cf., *MMG,* 241.
48 *Harijan*, 29 August, 1936; cf., *MMG*, 236.
49 *Young India,* 5-11-1925.
50 Duane Elgin, *op. cit.*, 28.

The possessive and accumulative nature of industrialism causes massive pollution to nature. Rain forests are cut down without any regard. There is neither reverence nor gratitude towards nature and its life giving principles. When everyone wanted to appropriate nature for personal gain, Gandhi related with them in a familial way. He took a stand in favour of nature and voiced for these voiceless ones. In opting for voluntary poverty, he promoted the practice of non-possession with a spirit of detachment and a love of nature. He respected every being as the children of the same God the Father or mother earth and, therefore, taught that everyone has equally the right of being a creature.

Ecological degradation of the universe due to the ambition of people has no bound since there is lack of concern for future. The principle of universal brotherhood or sisterhood and the ideal of s*arvodaya* are the two important visions of Gandhi that promote ecological justice as a possible way of perceiving and relating with nature. In view of the growing ecological crisis, they lead us towards a proper perspective to safeguard nature. There is a wrong notion that the human is the supreme creation and therefore has the power to dominate and rule over nature. Gandhi developed a deep sense of mystical reverence and filial respect for mother earth and taught a responsible, brotherly relationship with nature, not as an 'object' to use but as a 'subject' to relate with.[51]

Gandhi held that it was man's obligation and duty to relate to the non-human world in a gentle and respectful manner.[52] All creatures, including harmful ones, have a place in this universe as creatures of God, and humans are not authorized to do violence to them. Gandhi's cow-protection programme was an expression of his sincere consideration of the weak and mute animal world. Gandhi's vegetarian diet became a choice in his life when he was in England. He understood its relation to love of animal and birds. He developed a high sensitivity to nature all through his life. When he was in Yaravada prison, he once asked

51 Nithiyasagayam, "Gandhi's Search for Religion," Unpublished Paper Presented at the International Conference on World Peace, Washington D.C., February, 1996.

52 Cf., *Young India*, 6 October, 21; *CWMG*, vol. XXVII, 46; *Letter to Mirabehn*, 11 March, 1933; *CWMG*, vol. LIV, 55.

for a few neem leaves. Kaka Kalelkar brought a branch as there were many neem trees around. But Gandhi replied that having many trees was not a reason to pluck more leaves than needed. He also said that even to pluck more leaves than needed, one must ask for pardon from the tree.[53] During that time, he used neem twigs for brushing his teeth. He used to cut and remove the used part and continue to use the same twig the next day. When he was asked for the reason, he said, "We have no right to throw it away until it is dry."[54] Thus Gandhi's sensibility towards nature was neither a matter of superficial feelings nor a result of reasoning but the emergence of compassionate relationship with the nature coming from his innermost being.

Today, much more than ecology (the knowledge of the creation) or eco-consciousness (an understanding of the creation and nature), we need *eco-sophy*[55] (the wisdom of the universe). This goes beyond mere knowledge of the creation and leads to a heart-level relationship with it. In this respect, even a small stone is revered since it is elder to most people in the world; likewise, a flower is venerated as it is more beautiful than any person. Hence one is led to accept, in all humility, equal sharing of 'creature-liness.' This consciousness leads one to revere as well as to respect the cosmos, and thus to learn the message given by all the animate and inanimate beings. This is precisely what one finds in the attitude of Gandhi towards the universe.

Gandhi's observation that 'the earth produces enough to feed all' is valid even today. As Gandhi has suggested, a greater sharing of wealth in all parts of the world would suffice for everyone to eat adequately and to clothe and shelter himself or herself comfortably. A sustainable living for all humans has to be ensured, irrespective of the present grossly unequal distribution of resources between the nations of Northern Hemisphere and the Southern Hemisphere. The

53 P. Sri, *Gandhium Leninum* (Tamil), (Madras: Star publication, 1928), 55.

54 Ibid.

55 Nithiya Sagayam, "The Eco-sophy of Francis of Assisi," a paper presented at The Assembly of World's Religions, August, 1992, Seoul, South Korea. The term Ecology, points to an approach at the level of knowledge. But much deeper than knowledge, wisdom is needed to approach the universe. The Greek word *Sophia* means wisdom. Hence the term *ecosophy* points to the wisdom of the universe. This includes both knowledge and compassionate relation with the universe.

selfish impulse to accumulate riches has to be replaced by a strong sense of justice for nature and the poor that recognizes the rights of all people to meet their needs in life. Dr. Pushparajan observes that the sense of respect for nature calls for a greater solidarity among men based on ethical and spiritual values. We need to consider the present generation as well as future ones too.[56] Gandhi's concept of bequest and trusteeship, if carried out in its social and spiritual sense, taking into account the marginalized as well as future generation, will become a great solace to suffering humanity, both today and in the future.

4. Eco-Friendly vs. Economy-Friendly Development

Today's scientific development and technologies are oriented towards the multiplication of money and wealth. Materialistic gain takes centre stage to the detriment of society and its welfare. But Gandhi proposes an ethic of Eco-friendly development that sustains the universe rather than an economy-friendly mode of development that pampers the rich minority at the expense of the rest.

Gandhi's objection to ever-growing mechanization and his harsh criticism on the present-day industrialization shed light on the various ethical and moral problems involved in it. According to him the application of machinery "should not cripple the limbs of man."[57] Many modern authors also observe unhealthy consequences in modern technology. Donna Door states, "Capitalist economics explicitly reduces human labour to a commodity to be bought and sold; in this way it provides a justification for the widespread exploitation of workers by those who own the means of production."[58]

Gandhi saw in machinery the growth of materialism and the multiplication of insatiable wants, which lead to the moral decline

56 The use of scarce and non-renewable resources like fossil fuel has to be made available to all. Our immediate attention must turn to limiting the present consumption rate, especially of fossil fuels, since a large part of our resources has been used up by now. See A. Pushparajan, *Ecological World-View for a Just Society*, 36-37.

57 *Young India*, 13 November, 1924. See also *MMG*, 234.

58 D. Dorr, "To Care for the Earth," *The Furrow*, 38 (1987), 459- 60.

of man. The craze for industrialization, as Gandhi pointed out, if not properly guided by moral values, leads to social injustice, unjust distribution of wealth, unemployment and exploitation of human labour and raw materials. Due to these consequences, rising unemployment and growing inequality remain as significant features of today's global economy.[59]

Gandhi was for ecology-friendly, holistic development. Hence he proposed recycling of all renewable resources. When there was a non-renewable resource, he proposed reduction of its use. Under this approach, Gandhi held that as far as possible, nothing should be treated as waste or be thrown away. In other words, he spoke of 'wealth out of waste.' This was a clear sign of his deep concern for nature and its future. In short, for Gandhi a technology that gives priority to the abolition of hunger, poverty and pollution is what is needed.

The Indian society of Gandhi's time desperately needed a total transformation at all levels: political, social, religious and cultural. Though the "freedom movement" of Gandhi won the long desired political freedom for India, it was only a prelude to an all-round welfare of all.[60] India's 'political' freedom was not his ultimate goal.[61] It was only a means towards the goal of attaining a "new society" and a "social equilibrium" which would be a culmination of moral, religious, social and material progress.

Gandhi had a concrete vision to solve every human problem from all aspects. On various occasions he made this vision known:

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59 Cf. D. M. Diwakar, "Contemporary Crisis and Gandhian Insight," in *Gandhi and 21st Century*, ed., J. Pandey (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1988), 109.

60 For Gandhi, involvement in politics was not for mere political freedom alone. His political guru, G. K. Gokhale, emphasized the spiritualizing of politics. See. M.K Gandhi, *Gokhale, My Political Guru,* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House Publishers, 1958), 50.

61 Gandhi desired a freedom which is political, socio-economic and moral and which would lead towards the welfare of all. Cf., M.K. Gandhi*, Young India,* Jan. 2, 1924. The other kind of freedom is the ultimate real salvation of man. Both are interconnected. See, *CWMG,* vol. XVIII, 471.

> I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country; have an effective voice; an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people; an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony. There can be no room in such an India for the curse of untouchability… Women will enjoy the same rights as men. Since we shall be at peace with all the rest of the world, neither exploiting, nor being exploited... All interests of the dumb millions will be scrupulously respected… This is the India of my dreams… I shall be satisfied with nothing else.[62]

Conclusion

It is high time that Gandhian dream for that Ideal society or Global Home is made possible and that each one is convinced of a value-based life. This is a determined stand against greed and exploitation of the other's rights. Everyone both present and those yet to come is entitled to enjoy this Global Home as his or her own. We have not only interdependency on the whole cosmos for our sustenance but also special duty to safeguard the rights of our global home.

Gandhian strategic choice of voluntary poverty for one's own life and society at large is focused on the protection and sustenance of the universe. It creates a new culture of contentment and commitment for others' entitlement in every sphere of life.

62 R.K. Prabhu (ed.), *MMG.,* 314.

ENHANCING COSMOS - OUR HOME!

V. Clement Joseph, cssr

Abstract: *The question that is discussed in this paper is on 'Enhancing Cosmos - Our Home.' The term 'Home' is very dear to all of us. The word 'enhance' means to intensify, to increase. It is possible to discuss 'home' from a cosmic point of view. But would it not be presumptuous, if not outright preposterous, to propose any enhancement of the cosmic home! The paper proposes a certain 'dynamics of home': Recognize! Relate! Resurrect! For thousands of years it was considered to be absolutely reasonable to observe the sun going round the earth. The 'Copernican-heliocentrism' changed the perspectives radically from the standpoint of science. In the history of science we have discovered a sequence of better and better theories or models, from Plato to the classical theory of Newton to modern quantum theories. We now have a theory of everything, called M-theory, which predicts that many universes were created out of nothing. Only a very few would allow creatures like us to exist. Still, on planet Earth, everyone needs a 'home' to belong to. Would it be possible to make everyone belong to a 'home'?*

* * * * * * *

"Up to now, most scientists have been too occupied with the development of new theories that describe what the universe is to ask the question why. On the other hand, the people whose business it is to ask why, the philosophers, have not been able to keep up with the advance of scientific theories." – Stephen Hawking[1]

1 Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (London: Bantam Books, 1988), 184-85. Henceforth *(BHT)*

…philosophy is dead. Philosophy has not kept up with modern developments in science, particularly physics – Stephen Hawking[2]

1. Cosmos - Our Home

The topic of discussion in this paper is 'Enhancing Cosmos - Our Home.' 'Home' is an endearing word. The dictionary meaning of the word refers to a dwelling place or a place of residence. 'Home' also refers to a place where something flourishes, is most typically found, or from which it originates. The word 'enhance' means to intensify, to increase. More apt meanings would be to further improve the quality, value, or extent of something or some place. It is possible to discuss 'home' from a cosmic point of view. Would it not be presumptuous, if not outright preposterous, to propose any enhancement of the cosmic home! Perhaps, we could learn to become aware that we belong to the cosmic home.

We propose for our consideration in this paper a certain 'dynamics of home': 1) *Recognize* – Learn to recognize the environment and the design of the 'home'; *Relate* – Acquire the required skills to relate with the multidimensional components and their processes in the environment and the design of the 'home'; *Resurrect* – Apply required technology to resurrect the regenerative components and renew their processes to sustain the design of the 'home.'

1.1. Recognize

For thousands of years it was considered to be the truth, or absolutely reasonable, to observe the sun going round the earth. Everyone was comfortable with sunshine and fearful of the scorching summer heat. *Suryanamaskar* is a heritage pride of the Indian *yoga* tradition; at present, the trend of global *yoga* practice! The 'Copernican-heliocentrism' changed the perspectives radically from the stand point of science. The astronomical model developed by Nicolaus Copernicus was published in 1543. Copernican heliocentrism positioned the Sun as the center of the Universe, motionless, with Earth and the other planets rotating

2 Stephen Hawking & Leonard Mlodinow, *The Grand Design: New Answers to the Ultimate Questions of Life* (London: Bantam Press, 2010), 5. Henceforth *(GD)*

around. Galileo Galilei affirmed and tried to demonstrate through the telescope and prove through impressive calculations this supposedly 'ridiculous alternative' to the established and non-negotiable truth about the geocentric cosmos.

Exactly 400 years ago, the Catholic Church in Europe took a very stern action against Galileo Galilei: "At the start of 1616, Monsignor Francesco Ingoli initiated a debate with Galileo, sending him an essay disputing the Copernican system. Galileo later stated that he believed this essay to have been instrumental in the action against Copernicanism that followed."[3] Today, no one would want to hold a position that was then theologically affirmed, with biblical backing, the very absurd proposal: *the sun was going round the earth!*

In his book, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes*, published in 1988, Stephen Hawking has stated:

> Throughout the 1970s I had been mainly studying black holes, but in 1981 my interest in questions about the origin and fate of the universe was reawakened when I attended a conference on cosmology organized by the Jesuits in the Vatican. The Catholic Church had made a bad mistake with Galileo when it tried to lay down the law on a question of science, declaring that the sun went round the earth. Now, centuries later, it had decided to invite a number of experts to advise it on cosmology. At the end of the conference the participants were granted an audience with the Pope. He told us that it was all right to study the evolution of the universe after the big bang, but we should not inquire into the big bang itself because that was the moment of Creation and therefore the work of God. I was glad then that he did not know the subject of the talk I had just given at the conference—the possibility that space-time was finite but had no boundary which means that it had no beginning, no moment of Creation. I had no

3 Christopher M. Graney, *Setting Aside All Authority: Giovanni Battista Riccioli and the Science against Copernicus in the Age of Galileo* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 2015), 68-69. The Catholic Church placed *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* on the List of Prohibited Books, pending correction. Francesco Ingoli (1578-1649), an Italian priest, had written an essay, listing eighteen scientific objections and four theological objections. The English translation of this essay was published for the first time in 2015.

> desire to share the fate of Galileo, with whom I feel a strong sense of identity, partly because of the coincidence of having been born exactly 300 years after his death![4]

In his historic recent work, *The Grand Design: New Answers to the Ultimate Questions of Life,* published in 2010, Stephen Hawking took courage to affirm that "Scientists have become the bearers of the torch of discovery in our quest for knowledge. … They lead us to a new picture of the universe and our place in it that is very different from the traditional one, and different even from the picture we might have painted just a decade or two ago."[5]

In spite of his physical condition,[6] Stephen Hawking is the 'greatest theoretical physicist' of our times who puts profound ideas of science across in simple terms that ordinary people can understand. We can no longer picture our cosmic home in any simplistic manner, overlooking what has already become common knowledge in middle and high school science classes. It is embarrassing to find Stephen Hawking commenting on the pathetic condition of philosophy *vis-a-vis* science.

> Up to now, most scientists have been too occupied with the development of new theories that describe *what* the universe is to ask the question *why*. On the other hand, the people whose business it is to ask *why*, the philosophers, have not been able to keep up with the advance of scientific theories. In the eighteenth century, philosophers considered the whole of human knowledge, including science, to be their field and discussed question such as: Did the universe have a beginning? However, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries science became too technical and mathematical for the philosophers, or anyone else except a few specialists. Philosophers reduced the scope of their inquiries so much that Wittgenstein, the most famous philosopher of this century, said "The sole remaining task for philosophy is the analysis of language." What a comedown from the great tradition of philosophy from Aristotle to Kant!

4 Stephen Hawking, BHT, 122.

5 Stephen Hawking, GD, 5.

6 Stephen Hawking was diagnosed in his early twenties as having Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), known in the UK as Motor Neuron Disease.

> However if we do discover a complete theory, it should in time be understandable in broad principle by everyone, not just a few scientists. Then we shall all, philosophers, scientists, and just ordinary people, be able to take part in the discussion of the question of why it is that we and the universe exist.[7]

1.2. Relate

During the past three decades and a half of my sacerdotal apostolic activities I have come across more Catholics, including Priests and Religious Men and Women, who are still comfortable only with the Aristotelian geocentric model in their philosophic-spiritual discourses. The cosmic home for them is centered on the planet Earth and the heavens are still up above in the air, vertically above their own heads! However, they are aware that people live on the other side of planet Earth as well.

Many among those who are directly involved in education of students in schools and colleges, particularly when they have to deal with science related disciplines of study, have not also learnt yet to integrate the new scientific insights into their mental concepts of the world and the universe. Practically all the Seminaries have redrafted their syllabi for cosmology or philosophy of science; however, the professors and students of theology are more preoccupied with their composite nature of disciplines of study and fail to redraft a more relevant theology including the current cosmological models.

Use of language may take longer to change but the changes in perspectives need to become ordinary awareness and perception of daily life. It may be difficult to say it differently from: 'The sunrise today was a few minutes after six in the morning,' or 'tomorrow the sunrise will be a little later than today,' even when we are certain that the sun never rises or sets! It is urgent and necessary that philosophers today become comfortable to work with the scientific model of 'space-time' perspective. When will it be more common among us to converse about the "multiple universes" or "Multi-verse" as casually

7 Stephen Hawking, BHT, 184-85.

as normal speech of the commoner instead of one categorical "Universe"?[8]

> In the history of science we have discovered a sequence of better and better theories or models, from Plato to the classical theory of Newton to modern quantum theories. … Will this sequence eventually reach an end point, an ultimate theory of the universe, that will include all forces and predict every observation we can make, or will we continue forever finding better theories, but never one that cannot be improved upon? We do not yet have a definitive answer to this question, but we now have a candidate for the ultimate theory of everything, .. called M-theory.
>
> M-theory is not a theory in the usual sense. It is a whole family of different theories, each of which is a good description of observations only in some range of physical situations. … According to M-theory, ours is not the only universe. Instead, M-theory predicts that a great many universes were created out of nothing. Their creation does not require the intervention of some supernatural being or god.[9] Rather, these multiple universes arise naturally from physical law. They are a prediction of science. Each universe has many possible histories and many possible states at later times, that is, at times like the present, long after their creation. Most of these states will be quite unlike the universe we observe and quite unsuitable for the existence of any form of life. Only a very few would allow creatures like us to exist. Thus our presence selects out from this vast array only those universes that are compatible with our existence. Although we are puny and insignificant on the scale of the cosmos, this makes us in a sense the lords of creation.

8 Stephen Hawking, GD, 137.

9 "…regularities and laws were obvious only in astronomy and a few other situations. However, as civilization developed, and particularly in the last 300 years, more and more regularities and laws were discovered. The success of these laws led Laplace at the beginning of the nineteenth century to postulate scientific determinism, that is, he suggested that there would be a set of laws that would determine the evolution of the universe precisely, given its configuration at one time.
Laplace's determinism was incomplete in two ways. It did not say how the laws should be chosen and it did not specify the initial configuration of the universe. These were left to God. God would choose how the universe began and what laws it obeyed, but he would not intervene in the universe once it had started. In effect, God was confined to the areas that nineteenth-century science did not understand." Stephen Hawking, BHT, 182.

To understand the universe at the deepest level, we need to know not only *how* the universe behaves, but *why*: Why is there something rather than nothing? Why do we exist? Why this particular set of laws and not some other? This is the Ultimate Questions of Life, the Universe and Everything.[10]

When we begin to grope into the expanse of the *Multi-verse*, and take into serious philosophical consideration their possible histories, we would then find ourselves like the philosophers of repute of gone by eras, laboring beyond the sciences and not be shelved into a corner with analysis of language as the sole remaining task for philosophy, as Wittgenstein observed.

1.3. Resurrect

Everyone needs a shelter to live under. That isn't enough. Everyone needs a 'home' to belong to. The sad part of the life situation of people today is that not everyone belongs to a home. When one takes a look at the magnitude of the problem of the displaced people, whether they are prisoners of war or refugees or migrants, it seems an impossible dream to think of bringing everyone in the world to a house to live in. Would it be possible to make everyone belong to a 'home'?

Everyone is constantly coping with everything that seems to be chaotic. In every recognizable turns and twists of life, there are myriads of complex structures which contain unmanageable details of enormous data that are essential for survival and progress of any and every single individual. Information from science accessed through appropriate technology dominates human life.

In spite of the unimaginable complexities of current reality, life of humans in society and environment continues to be multi-dimensional processes of

- Daily struggle for survival against hunger, disease, aging and death

10 Stephen Hawking, GD, 7-10.

- Constant search for measures to protect oneself, family and environment from nature and threats of extremes of weather, e.g., storms & cyclones, drought and famine
- Gradual and yet determined changes in cultural patterns with clarification of values for common life to promote and foster fairness, justice, peace and harmony in society and environment.[11]

We, the author of this paper with a number of committed individuals, have made deliberate and persistent efforts to reach out to the most abandoned.[12] We tried to bring "Health Care & Medical Services" to the poor and the suffering in the villages of Madurai district in Tamil Nadu, where professional assistance of the kind was not available, even as late as the last decade of the previous millennium. A '*Movement for Universal Health Integration and Liberation*' (MUHIL) was started in 1990 in response to the call of the United Nations to join the 'Health for All by 2000 Project'.[13] By 1998, MUHIL had developed and put in place a Health Delivery System to cover nearly 80 villages. The first four years of the new millennium witnessed in these villages a severe drought. It brought down much misery in the form of poverty, disease and famine. Small and tiny farmers sold away their farmlands

11 It is at this juncture I take a pause to express an obligation to propose a 'Salute!' to Thinkers and Writers in the order of Dr. A. Pushparajan, who have rendered immeasurable service to the Reader Public with their inspiring and thought provoking works, themselves inspired and moved by the *mahatmas*, e.g., Jesus of Nazareth, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and others.

12 In order to enter into social work in the rural areas, the author pursued post graduate studies in Gandhian Thought at the Madurai-Kamaraj University and obtained his M. A. (Gandhian Thought). It was during those years that the author was privileged to gain the acquaintance of Dr. A. Pushparajan in 1991. Twenty-five years of friendship with Dr. Pushparajan certainly has made indelible marks on my character and personality.

13 www.muhil.org. Muhil Health Center (Estd. 1998) at 6th Km on NH 208 from Tirumangalam to Kollam serves as a hub for a number of needy people of the villages in Madurai District of Tamil Nadu since 1996, providing health care and medical services along the lines of the Siddha System of Medicine by professionally qualified doctors. The Siddha System of Medicine is one of the ancient Indian Systems of Medicine, approved by the Government of India. With gratitude and pride we acknowledge that Dr. A. Pushaparajan &family was part of the pioneer volunteer team of MUHIL in the early years of the 1990s. All of them are still Friends of MUHIL.

and migrated; so did the landless farm workers—one would wonder, to where? They dared to drift into anonymity as refugees in their own land and nation, while some took the radical decision to commit suicide! Besides, due to the excessively intense chemical farming, much of the farm lands had become sterile and unfit for cultivation. Farming and gardening had become failure industries and hence unattractive occupation even for agriculturists. '*Karmuhil Organic Farms*' was our attempt to cope with this predicament.

There are different models of organic farming that people adhere to in order to cope with the problems that are created due to chemical farm inputs into their lands. We adopted the '*Biodynamic Agriculture*' (BDA) methods and established '*Karmuhil Organic Farms*' (2004).

> Biodynamic agriculture is a method of farming that aims to treat the farm as a living system which interacts with the environment, to build healthy, living soil and to produce food that nourishes and vitalizes and helps to develop mankind. The underlying principle of biodynamics is making life-giving compost out of dead material. The methods are derived from the teachings of Rudolf Steiner and subsequent practitioners.[14]

Through '*Biodynamic Agriculture*' (BDA) methods we were able to mobilize the small and tiny farmers of the villages along with landless farm workers and renew their enthusiasm in farming occupation. Biodynamic Agriculture is also a method of farming which takes seriously into account the fact that the farm is integrally connected to and influenced by both the planet Earth and the Multi-verse. This, to our little minds, is, in fact, trying to take 'baby steps' into the new venture of walking on the farmlands of planet Earth and trying to breathe in and out the energies of the forces of cosmos. Thus, for more than a quarter of a century, we have been making efforts to enhance the life-protective systems of health and agriculture for and by our poor people of the villages in this very tiny spot of planet Earth, of the Solar System, of the Milky way in the millions of galaxies of the Multi-verse.

14 Peter Proctor, *Biodynamic Farming and Gardening – Philosophy, Principles and Practice* (Pune: Other India Press. 2007), 13. It was first published under the title, *Grasp the Nettle* by Random House, New Zealand, 1997.

People could in practice live and belong to the cosmic home. It is ours!

2. A Reflective Conclusion

Cosmological vis-à-vis atomic insights in science and the corresponding technological advancements achieved extraordinary global progress during the last century in the fields of industry, agriculture and medicine, never witnessed before in human history. They were also capable of evolving, at the same time, the horrible development of nuclear and chemical weaponry in warfare which engulfed the human race during the World Wars within the same 20th century.

The post-independent Indian economy is multi-tiered. The urban economy and the underworld economy are integral in structure and function. Steady mobilization and concentration of money and power in the urban economy has facilitated the emergence of and sustained an underworld economy. The mushroom growth of urban and underworld economy has paralyzed the normal and gradual growth of rural economy. Criminalization of politics and globalization of markets have had their adverse effects on the time-tested processes of production, sale and consumption of local products. Large-scale industries cannot sustain large populations and cannot provide employment for all. Labor unrest in the organized industrial sector is further complicating the urban economy. Rural economy, as a result, is not growing fast and it is not able to compete with industrial economy. The marginal farmers and agricultural laborers are marginalized and exploited. Growing population and mechanization have further aggravated their problems. Such a system resulted in the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, and poverty and misery for the vast majority of people. Further, industrialization, which is based on non-renewable resources like mineral wealth, oil etc. is likely to consume its own base and lead to dangerous trends of adverse global climate change.

Gandhi's subtle perception of the extension of the constructive and positive power of the human 'soul force' with *satya, ahimsa* and

satyagraha led the biggest non-violent revolution in the world. When the world was emerging to recognize and relate with the 'big,' the 'money' & the 'powerful,' Gandhi was historically moving in the opposite direction of the 'small,' the 'many' & the 'downtrodden.' *Sarvodaya*,*"* better still, *antyodaya*, was the concern of Gandhi. Albert Einstein seemed to have said, "Any intelligent fool can make things bigger, more complex, and more violent. It takes a touch of genius—and a lot of courage—to move in the opposite direction." These words of Einstein dramatically capture in full the trend and the soul of the Mahatma as the 20th Century political leader of one of the ancient civilizations of the world to forge a non-violent independence struggle for the mass of the Indian peoples. Gandhi realized with success national freedom from the unjust and oppressive colonial powers of the British Empire in India. Gandhi became the *Mahatma*, acclaimed as such by the masses of people. Spontaneous lowering of the national flags of practically every nation in the world at the news of the assassination of the Mahatma was a historical salute to the Father of the Nation.

Gandhian perspectives of spiritualized politics and value based economic processes are expected to promote service and transformation. Alternative technology, based on renewable resources, needs to be invented soon to cope with the current trends of depletion of precious resources. Reconstruction of the rural economy by the masses in the villages along the lines of devolution of power and along the lines of building ecological regenerative agriculture and society might just be way out of the impasse facing the marginalized poor of the villages.

Part - VII

Building a Gandhian Home

PROF. DR. A. PUSHPARAJAN

THE JOURNEY OF MY LIFE AND THOUGHT
A Gandhian Road to Christian Commitment

Here is an attempt to present an autobiographical sketch as well as the philosophical journey of an Indian Christian who has been deeply committed to live his Christian faith right from his childhood. Certain questions that cropped up in his village setting during the pre-Vatican II period were pursued for doctoral research as well. In the process, when challenged by the writings of M.K. Gandhi on the one hand and inspired by the teachings of the Second Vatican Council on the other, he was able not only to make a right diagnosis of the ills of his former way of religious living, but also to find a wholesome remedy to them. Above all, he humbly claims, he has found in Gandhi a sufficient stimulus for a sound philosophical basis to re-interpret his faith-claims, so as to make them relevant to the Indian context that is religiously pluralistic and socially wounded by many sorts of structural injustice, inequality and discrimination.

1. Humble Beginnings

Born and brought up in a remote village in the drought-stricken district of Ramanathapuram in Tamil Nadu, my life had humble beginnings. However the daily life of the village children was full of things that kept me busy and preoccupied. Every now and again I found myself drawing back and wondering what it was all about. May be some of those questions were trivial, arising merely out of curiosity; but some were fundamental questions too. My father was a knowledgeable person, and listened to my queries patiently, never refusing to give me an answer. He gave me convincing answers to

many of my questions. Perhaps that developed in me a deeper interest in the sustained exploration of those questions concerning my life of faith in the living context of our mother land. I would like to mention some of those questions that I am able to remember even today, which may be grouped under three categories: (a) Issues about the day-to-day life, for instance, why should we not keep our head towards the North while sleeping?[1] (b) Questions about the cultural behaviours of the community.[2] (c) Matters pertaining to the religious life of the community. It is precisely this third category of questions that became the kernel of my philosophical quest later.

Ours was a tiny village, but strongly rooted Christian traditional piety. Thanks to the strenuous efforts of the dedicated clergy of the Jesuit Mission, there was a pious atmosphere among the people, who were rigorously following the Church's teachings, and moral and cultic practices intensely. The Holy Mass was celebrated regularly in the morning in which the whole parish would participate daily. In the evening night prayers were conducted, mostly attended by children. The family rosary was compulsory at home. Probably because of the arduous following of traditional piety it became a fertile ground for vocation. More than 75 priests and over hundreds of consecrated people have hailed from this tiny village during its 100 years of existence as a parish. The centenary celebrations got over just in the month of May 2016.

1 We were asked never to keep our head towards the North, while sleeping. If you ask for reasons for it they would quote a verse from *Siddhas' Texts*. Its import is this: To keep the head towards the East was the perfect choice (*uthamam*), the South means you will prolong your life-span *(onguir),* the West is the tolerable (*Mathimam)*; the North is the worst *(anartham*). Not many would give the why of these prescriptions by the *Siddhar*. But my father replied to me in a simple but convincing way thus: "The magnetic force of the North Pole would draw the blood circulation of the body towards the head so as to disrupt the brainpower even leading to lunatic condition, whereas as the pull would be lesser in the West and South, and the least in East, as the earth is rotating on its own axis.

2 For instance, men who joined the funeral procession up to the cemetery would all go straight to the pond and take a ritual bath in the pond which is a little away from the village, even at late hours, 9 or 10 p.m., though it was pitch dark. As there was no electric power to lighten the street lamps those days, I used to be very frightened and ask my father: "Was it not a cruel custom?" But my father coolly explained the hygienic purposes behind it.

This small village is surrounded by Hindu villages. Sociologically and culturally there was such great amity between our life-style and theirs, that we followed all the customs that they too were following, such as lighting the sacred lamp in houses, taking *arathi* while welcoming newly wedded couple, women wearing jasmine flowers in the back of their head, putting a *tilak* with sandal paste on the forehead, drawing *kolams* (beautiful patterns on the earth in front of the house). In particular there was a Hindu family from a nearby village with whom our family had been having close contact for more than three generations at socio-cultural levels. The interrelationships of these two families were so intense that any stranger would think that we were all originally blood-relatives, and that we just happened to be converted Christians. But actually it was not the case. To put it in rural parlance, we belonged to different castes and colour (*varna,* meaning profession/ occupation). Even then the friendship of the grandfathers of both the families had been sustained so uninterruptedly that we, the children of the Christian family, would treat every member of 'that' family with the same bond and love that we showed to our blood relatives. No special function would be held in our family circles without their active participation and cooperation, and *vice versa*. During the festival days of the summer vacations, they would bring carts-load of Palmyra fruits and leave them in the main hall of our grandfather's house, because they owned a large Palmyra grove around their house. It had always given us, the young children, such a festive colour that we could never erase it from our memories.

However in matters of religion we were completely isolated from them. We were told that they were pagans, unsaved people, whereas we were all saved for the simple reason that we were Christians. Hence we should not have any interreligious contact with them. Faithful Catholics as we were, none of us raised any doubt about the Church's teachings. Surprisingly, they too respected our religious views. They were good enough to openly acknowledge our superiority in the overall morality, decency of living, disciplined way of our public worship, and the general life-style of the community as a whole. Nevertheless I for one was not comfortable at all with this sort of religious isolation. I used to wonder at the dichotomy of perception and behaviour between our village and all others.

To make the confusion worse, I knew for certain that some of those family members were known not only for moral uprightness but also for great spiritual heights. They excelled in holiness much more than some of our parishioners, who I knew for certain were so imperfect that they would not stand to any level of comparison with those people. How could they be condemned, I asked, for the simple reason that they were unbaptized? In the Catechism class, I was told that such people, even if they had not actually received the ritual baptism, they had baptism of desire on account of which they would go to heaven. But that would be a salvation granted purely by the mercy of God, whereas in our case we would merit it for the simple fact that we belonged to the Church. Their religion as such was condemned whereas our Church was saved. In fact we were all asked to pray for the conversion of all non-Catholics.[3] I might not have articulated it in precise terms then as I would do it today, but there was definitely an uncomfortable feeling about condemning those persons who belonged to other faiths than our own, but who were indeed lofty personalities of spirituality. I did not realize at that time that this feeling of discomfort would become a focal point of my research later for the Ph.D. dissertation!

2. Gandhian Influence Unawares!

I believe there was another important aspect of my childhood experience that shaped my philosophical thinking later. My father was a teacher by profession. In 1947 he founded a small school in a neighbouring village which consisted only of Hindus, all belonging to a particular caste which, even by its name, was notorious for burglary, debauchery and murder. A little far away from that village there was a hamlet consisting of Dalits only. The building of the school was in between the two villages. Rightly he had named it "Gandhiji's Government Aided Elementary School," because it was meant to cater

3 After the daily Mass, we the children used to sing a three-line chorus in a very appealing tune on the top of the voice: (1) *Mariyayin Masatra Irudayame, Pavikalukkaka Vendikollum! (2) Mariyayin Masatra Irudayame, Agnanikal, Pathithar, Thulukkarkalukkaka Vendikollum! (3) Mariyayin Masatra Irudayame, Indiyavukkaka Vendikollum!* It was a prayer addressed to Sacred Heart of Mary, imploring her intercession for the conversion of sinners in general (first line), the Protestants, unbelievers and Muslims (second line), and for the Indian nation (third line).

to the needs of the children of both these villages. It was in that school that we got our primary education, up to the 5th Class. The school was about two kilometres away from my village. No brick wall for the school, no concrete ceiling, no benches for children, no road facility, no electricity, and no common water supply. Yet, in a nearby riverbed we could dig a small little spring just with our hands for about a foot or two and draw sufficient water to quench our thirst. It was amidst such a natural environment that my early phase of education began.

Though there was a parish school in my own village, better equipped and manned by many teachers, etc., yet my father made us study in his school alone. Our classmates were all Hindus, including Dalits. We would all be squatted on the floor, each one's knees touching those of the other. While the children of the Hindu caste would use abusive words in calling the Dalit children, we addressed them in respectful terms. In fact the so called caste 'category' was not even known to us, at the time. Thus it was indeed a great providence that I imbibed already during my childhood days the spirit of some *Constructive Programmes* [4] of Gandhi, such as 'Communal unity,' Basic education, Village Sanitation, 'Removal of Untouchability,' and 'Equality of Religion.'

3. Groomed for the Spiritual, Philosophical and Theological

Again, it was not merely a chance-factor that I had to spend my adolescence in a Diocesan High School at Tiruchirapalli, which was attached to an orphanage managed by the Brothers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This gave me a lot of discipline, devotion to religion, daily pious exercises, and scope to listen to spiritual discourses daily. I was one of the foremost among the altar servers. I had won many prizes during my school days: for good conduct, speech competitions, and catechism exams. I still remember that I was zealous about establishing the uniqueness of my faith, challenging my Hindu friends in the class: "Is there any religious founder, except Jesus Christ, who died and rose again from death? Isn't that itself a proof for establishing that only Christianity is the truly revealed religion?"

4 M.K. Gandhi, *Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1941).

Upon completion of my schooling in March 1960, my father wanted me to pursue medicine. But I expressed my desire to become a priest. Meanwhile my mother fell sick and I had to stay home, nursing her. When we lost her in December 1960, it was one more pointer towards my call to priesthood. My simple argument against my father's wish was this: "Life is so uncertain that it is not unlikely that I would not die within a month after graduation as a medical doctor. If so, what purpose would it serve him or me? Instead, if I became a priest, I would be able to pray for him both here on earth and in the next. It will be beneficial to the salvation of all concerned."Finally the path was cleared and I joined the Seminary in 1961. After completing two years of Minor seminary studies in St. Peter's Seminary at Madurai, I was promoted to St. Paul's Major seminary at Tiruchirapalli to pursue Philosophy and Theology.

Great Philosophy Professors like Rev. Fr. Paul Colaco SJ and Rev. Fr. A. Lourduswamy SJ, trained us in the sharp and nuanced thinking of Scholastic Philosophy. The sympathetic and encouraging attitudes of young professors like Rev. Fr. P. Zacharias and the infirmary-in-charge Rev. Bro. Arulappan SJ were a real boost to my growth. Rev. Fr. James Loze SJ, the Rector of the Seminary, was both a visionary and dynamic missionary. He organized a Committee to translate the documents of Vatican II into Tamil. Even as the documents of Second Vatican Council were out of the press one by one, we were expected to translate them into our mother tongue.We used to spend all our free time during the day, and late hours at night in the translation work. This helped us get acquainted with the Conciliar documents, plus sparking in us a deep interest in the Renewal-spirit. This was a major factor that shaped my thinking later while doing my research.

Rev. Fr. Burck SJ, the Professor of Sacred Scripture played a decisive role in the formation of the religious slant in my thinking. He did not possess a doctorate, but his interpretation of the Bible was so spiritually oriented that it deeply touched my life; especially since I was about to encounter a significant turning point in my life.[5] I could not but

5 I was detected for glandular tuberculosis on account of which I was asked to discontinue from priestly training. But my Rector was good and kind. He arranged for an intense treatment that I was administered with a series of streptomycin injections for three months one each daily, and another set of 48 injections on

raise such questions as these: 'Is it the same Lord who once inspired me to resist the strong-willed decision of my father and passionately join the seminary but is now wanting me to leave the seminary and become a burden to him, after 'practically wasting' eight years of my bloom of youth?' Maybe I should turn out to be another Joseph V. Stalin and become a communist in India? Despite such questions that arose in the beginning, if I could still believe that God had a plan for me, it was only because of the scripture class on Abraham's faith. The undoubting faith of Abraham, as Fr. Burck taught, energized my flagging spirit so much that I could take the 'misfortune' rather calmly and with due resignation.

4. Encountering the 'Secular' and the 'Spiritual' in the Secular

However it was a terribly big "leap in the dark." I was just an SSLC. That meant I would need to begin my secular studies right from scratch, standing in the queue to buy an application form in order to enter the pre-university degree. That was indeed a real test of faith! Given my spiritual bent and the orientation to life I had so far, the world appeared a totally unfamiliar field. Unlike the safety and security I had enjoyed so far, I now found myself a fish out of water and a sheep amidst wolves. I was forced to adjust to the new situation through many trials and errors. But I needed to obey the Lord, just as Abraham "obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going" (Heb.11:8). There were always one or two good souls that gave me helping hand in all the critical moments. So much so that I could really 'feel' the benign interventions of God's protective hand in the new journey I was embarking upon. At every step I could see the hand of God.

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alternative days. After these 139 injections I was medically declared of having been cured of the disease. Even then my bishop, the archbishop of Madurai the Most Rev. Justin Diraviyam was clear in saying: "What I decided is once for all decided." My Rector wrote to few other bishops to take me, but in vain. Meanwhile I made a Novena for discernment, asking God to give me a clear sign regarding my vocation. Just then Fr. Rector had written to an archbishop of another region. So, I told myself that if I received a negative reply from him too, I would take it as God's decisive will indicative of my lay-vocation. And, on the fifth day of my Novena I got negative reply. So I got convinced then that I was called to pursue a lay vocation, with the good backing of philosophical and theological knowledge for which I have been groomed so far.

It was sheer providence that led me to the Dept. of Philosophy, Karnatak University, Dharwad, where I pursued my M.A. in Philosophy (1969-71). Many of my companions dissuaded me from doing an M.A. in Philosophy because its job opportunities were limited. But my counterargument was simple: "The past eight years of my training in religio-philosophical studies could not be put to waste"[6] Moreover, the lure of the great Professor K.J. Shah was too irresistible to say 'no' to. Not only was he the student of Ludwig Wittgenstein in Cambridge, but he was also profoundly an original thinker in his own right. Whereas Wittgenstein had "played a central, if not controversial, role in 20th century analytic philosophy,"[7] Professor Shah had not even introduced a paper on him or on linguistic analysis in the Department of Philosophy at KUD. This showed his non-partisan approach to Philosophy. However, his analytic power on any problem in philosophy was superb, which he passed on to his research scholars informally. It was by a special grace of God that I was awarded with the Teacher Fellowship of the UGC to do my doctoral research under the guidance of Professor Shah (1979-1981).

Above all, it was a great privilege designed by God that I should meet Professor K.J. Shah, a truly accomplished man of deep spirituality. The more and more closely I related myself with him in the 'secular' premises of a state university, the stronger and stronger my conviction became regarding a clear diagnosis of certain ills in my traditional spirituality, i.e., a threefold dichotomy of life: at the intrapersonal, intra-religious and interreligious levels.

4.1. The Intra-Personal Level

I found a big chasm between my so-called spirituality and its impact on other aspects of my personal life. Until I met Professor Shah I had viewed my spirituality as consisting of going through a lot of spiritual exercises. In fact, it was with utmost sincerity and with a genuine

6 In fact, to the surprise of many I got a teaching post in Philosophy, just within a month after my completion of MA in Philosophy, in June 1971.

7 "Ludwig Wittgenstein," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,*first published Nov 8, 2002; substantive revision Mar 3, 2014, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wittgenstein/ accessed August 30, 2016.

desire to become spiritual that I had honestly followed all of the spiritual exercises.[8] But I don't think I had ever integrated those pious exercises with my day-to-day life, thus affecting the sensuous and mental aspects of my growth. For instance,[9] the theme of a morning meditation might have been 'detachment.' I might have systematically followed all the steps outlined by our mentor on the previous night. However, if it happened to be a Wednesday, some of us would be the first ones to rush to the refectory for breakfast because we knew that the day's menu was *poory*. Our intention was to grab as many *poories* as possible, take them to a lonely table and consume them all, completely insensitive to the needs of the other members of the community. All this did not seem wrong to me at the time.

In contrast, here was a person who was indeed a towering exemplar of utter non-possession (*aparigraha*) with regard to material comforts[10] and complete detachment (*vairagya)* in food habits. He could abstain from ghee for more than a month, although it is an essential ingredient in a Jain home's vegetarian meal. Likewise he would forego rice or *chappatis* for over a month or so. Later he began to totally refrain from taking tea for a month or two. When inquired, he simply said: "Just for fun." It was only much later that I came to know that all these were ways of self-discipline lest he should be addicted to anything mundane or material.

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8 Reciting morning and evening prayers, daily in the morning spending half an hour time for meditating, followed by the Holy Mass with great devotion, and in the evening allotting time for spiritual reading, praying the rosary and making examination of conscience twice a day. Besides there were weekly confessions, exhortations, monthly recollections, and annual retreats, all of which I had undertaken seriously and sincerely. In fact the Rector of the Seminary would invariably add this one phrase "a sincere seminarian" in the Annual Report to be submitted to my bishop every year.

9 "Interreligious Relations: Past, Present and Future" in *Vaiharai: A Theological Quarterly* Oct. 3/4 (1998), 243-54.

10 Professor Shah belonged to a merchant's family in Mumbai. He forewent without any sorrow a vast share of property through inheritance just to pursue his philosophical studies in Dharwad an interior place in north Karnataka. All his concerns were centred only on scholarship, cutting new grounds in philosophy.

4.2. The Intra-Religious Level

I realized the dichotomy in me was not simply due to one's personal weakness, but a reflection of the dichotomous worldview that was commonly present in the Christian tradition: a clear cut separation between the 'sacred' and the 'secular.' Spirituality for Christians meant *to believe* in the uniqueness of Christ's atonement for our sins, the uniqueness of the Church's mediation and following all the practices prescribed by the Church. Once these beliefs and practices were faithfully adhered to, we were free to do what we wanted in every other aspect of our life. In other words the dichotomy was between beliefs on the one hand and practices on the other. The most telling illustration of the dichotomous approach to life is the following instance that happened in a Christian college where I served for 13 years. The principal of the college, a Reverend Father was about to sack a non-teaching staff member on flimsy grounds. Four of us from the teaching faculty objected to him. I personally engaged myself in dialogue with the principle for nearly 20 hours on various occasions because I was rather close to him. I pleaded with him to show mercy upon him."You may give him punishment that he deserves. But his family should not be punishedfor a mistake he has done. Besides he is the senior most of the office-staff.If you dismiss him where would he go? Would not his family come to streets?" But he would not budge from his decision. At one point I told him: "Father, you are a minister of the Church. You need to show mercy at least for the sake of Christ our Lord whose representative you are". His immediate retort to me was this: "I am a priest there (pointing his fingers to his Fathers' Residence). But I am a principal here".

The same sort of dichotomy was manifest in the Church's dealings too. The Church proclaimed aloud its belief in Jesus crucified. But her lifestyle in general was pompous and ostentatious. It boasted of the Sermon on the Mount as the noblest of religious teachings, yet its triumphalist approaches in actual day-to-day living was in contrast to the religious ideals enshrined in the Sermon. In fact, in moral theology it was taught that the evangelical counsels were good for the 'private perfection' of a few souls, but not practical enough in other fields of life like politics, society and economics. The 'Just War' theory was

defended and it got involved with racial discrimination and massive violence like the Crusades and the Inquisitions.

In contrast, Professor Shah was no person to proclaim any of his beliefs or background; but his whole life was spreading the aroma of genuine spirituality, utter simplicity, utmost detachment, total availability to others, least anxiety about the future, a great level of endurance, forbearance and an absolute forgiveness of even his worst enemies. I learned from him that no religious belief is valid unless it impacts your life and changes it too. Spirituality is no spirituality unless all the dimensions of my life are transformed by the pious practices.

4.3. The Inter-Religious Level

I saw a dichotomous viewpoint, manifest in the Church's official relationships with other religions. Claiming itself to be the only revealed religion, Christianity in the past accused all other religions to be false or at best partially true. The polarity of relations with which Western Christianity confronted other religions was perhaps justified by what the Western missionaries saw in India at that particular time, say when the popular religiosity showed signs of being degenerate and immoral, and the society was full of moral evils such as *sati*, the *devdasi* system, ritual infanticide, female infanticide, human sacrifice, female worship, fertility cults, use of crude idols in worship, worship of the phallus, untouchability, and so on.[11] In contrast to them all, they proclaimed their conviction regarding the uniqueness of their beliefs and practices and the superiority of their culture as well as religion.

But now, in my encounter with the nobility of Professor Shah who was a Jain, and his wife, a Brahmin, and his comrades who were mostly Lingayats, I began to wonder whether it was right to say that my faith was all true and theirs all false, whether my faith was supreme and theirs diabolic, whether my faith was 'truly revealed' while theirs was by mere human effort, whether my morality was noble and utmost whilst theirs was vile and wicked.

11 For a full elaborate treatment may be found Chapter 6 in *From Conversion to Fellowship: The Hindu Christian Encounter in the Gandhian Perspective*, ed., A.Pushparajan (Varanasi: Maitri Bhavan Dialogue Series 4, 1990), 112-29.

5. Theoretical Solution in Sight

The triple levels of dichotomy which I experienced in my encounter with Professor Shah were not to remain only at the experiential level. After all, I had gone to him to do scientific research on the "Problems in Interreligious Dialogue." We chose three problems for study: Idolatry, Interpretation of Scriptures and Conversion. My goal was to study the actual religious controversies that took place in the history of Christianity's relations with Hinduism. This method was very conducive to me, as I had qualified myself for an additional M.A. in History. The main contestants were the Western missionaries on one side and three representative thinkers on the other: Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Dayananda Saraswati and Mahatma Gandhi.

As I began to dive deeper into the analysis of the contestants' standpoints, I found that Gandhi's stance on many of the problems not only shed light on the relative merits of the contenders' positions but also it became a parameter to explain the basic problem of what religion is, what religions are and how a religious controversy arises.[12] This finally led me to take Gandhi very seriously. Those Western missionaries who contested with Gandhi were well educated. Most of them had doctorates and occupied important positions in their Churches.[13] However Gandhi could put up a stiff intellectual fight with them all, and even shatter their 'scholarly' arguments. I found further that Gandhi's ideas could even be considered as a source of the epistemological criteria for the newly emerging science called 'Theology of Religion.'[14]

12 A. Pushparajan, *From Conversion to Fellowship* (1990), 286-96.

13 To mention a few of those missionaries whom Gandhi countered are: Andrew Murray (1828-1917) the first president of the Young Men's Christian Fellowship (YMCA); Charles Freer Andrews (1871-1940) an Anglican missionary, Head of Philosophy Dept. in St. Stephen's College, Delhi; Eli Stanley Jones (1884–1973) a renowned Methodist theologian; Dr. John R. Mott, (1865-1955) who can be rightly be called the father of the World Council of Churches (WCC); Dr. Toyohiko Kagawa (1888-1960), Japanese evangelist author of over 240 books; Dr. C.C. (Sir) Chesterman (1894-1983) medical missionary of great fame; Jonathan T. Crane (1819-80) an American Clergyman; Pierre Cérésole (1879-1945) a member of the Swiss Federal Council and a President of the Swiss Confederation; Father Verrier Elwin (1902-64) an English anthropologist.

14 My paper presented in one of the earlier Annual Meetings of the ACPI: "Gandhi's

Further I realized that Gandhi's interest was never restricted to merely matters of religion but also extended to other issues like modernization, economics, politics, medicine, education, environment, etc. This aroused my curiosity to study Gandhi much more comprehensively. Hence, I took the trouble of taking another Master's in 'Gandhian Thought' at Madurai Kamaraj University. I never imagined at the time that when I had qualified for an M.A in Gandhian Thought in 1985, that I would be appointed as Reader in Gandhian Studies in the Dept. of Gandhian and Ramalingar Philosophy, headed by Professor K. Arunachalamji. He was another towering personality of spirituality, rightly called *Maharshi Yogi*. My association with him drew my bias in favour of naturopathy, particularly water-therapy, which was indeed a boon to me, as I had suffered a lot from a serious illness in the past.

More than the personal benefits, the university-post gave me many opportunities to address audiences of national and international importance and to take up visiting professorship on duty leave. Every assignment that came on my way was a mini-research for me, either deepening and/or widening my original area of research. Moreover, this new position gave me a lot of scope to begin a lot of outreach activities to spread the Gandhian value of communal harmony, interreligious dialogue, etc., mainly amongst school children. They were so well received and yielded such a rich harvest that I could establish a separate department in the same university in 1994, named 'Department of Interreligious Relations,' again a sheer act of Divine Providence. The position as a Head and Professor of the new Department gave excellent opportunities to start new courses like a postgraduate diploma in Peace and Value Education (PGDip in PV.Ed). Another important course that I became very famous was Gandhian Spirituality, which I am conducting even now after my formal retirement. I also initiated some scholars into certain research programmes after my pet themes. Above all in and through my department I could organize many national and world level seminars,

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Concept of Truth: An Epistemological Foundation for Theology of Religions," later developed into a doctoral thesis, under my guidance, Joy Kachappilly, *Gandhi and Truth: An Approach to the Theology of Religion* (New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2005).

to cut new grounds for Interreligious relations, and conduct workshops for preparation of *Guidelines for Dialogue of Religions.*[15]

There was still another platform, again providentially set for me as it were, to pursue my areas of interest in the field level! On the occasion of the golden jubilee celebrations of the Archdiocese of Madurai, Archbishop M. Arokiasamy instituted a specific office for dialogue in his Curia, appointing me as the first Secretary of the Commission for Dialogue in 1988. Just at that time the CBCI Commission for Dialogue was at the zenith of its glory under the dynamic leadership of Rev. Fr. Albert Nambiaparambil CMI, a dedicated organizer and a passionate propagator of interreligious harmony. As I had already known him well,[16] I could establish an excellent rapport between the diocesan commission for Dialogue and the national level CBCI Commission. Under the aegis of his Commission, then, it was easy for me to organize a number of programmes in the Department as well as in the archdiocese. It was again a huge shower of blessings that I was kept as the secretary of this commission for nearly 15 years. Thus I could avail myself of both the offices—secular and religious—for experimenting the Gandhian values of nonviolence, peace, and communal harmony in line with Church's spirit of interreligious dialogue promoted post-Vatican II among schools and colleges.[17] At the same time, through the Commission for Dialogue, I could organise numerous type of programmes,[18] that too, quite successfully.[19]

15 A. Pushparajan & T. Oomman, *Issues in Hindu Christian Relations (Guidelines)*, (Nagpur: NCCI, Unit II, 1996).

16 Originally we were all regularly participating in the Annual Meetings of the Indian Philosophical Congress, along with great stalwarts like Rev. Fr. De Smet sj, and De Marneffe sj and later became the founding members of the ACPI around 1975-76.

17 "Promoting Inter-Religious Harmony in Schools and Colleges," in *Inter-Faith Relations and Higher Education* (Delhi: Indian Society for Propagation of Christian Knowledge, 2007), 213-31.

18 For all detailed list of programmes please see "Palsamaya Uravukku Namadhu Pangalippu," (Tl) Our Contribution to Interreligious Relations, in *Palasthena Mudhal Pandiyanaadu Varai (From Palestine to the Pandiya Kingdom)* ed., Madurai Anand (Madurai: Platinum Jubilee of Madurai Archdiocese Publication, 2013), 400-39.

19 The secret of my success was that I never said "no" to any invitation, unless one overlapped the other. Hard work was the only *mantra* that I could use in responding to those invitations. A lion's share of my success goes to my good wife Angela

The result was obvious: the more opportunities I got to present my talks and papers (all connected with my field of research or/and outreach programmes) the more they got published in theological journals and research magazines. This in turn sharpened my thinking more and more pointedly towards the Gandhian road, making my Christian commitment stronger and stronger, meaningful to a religiously pluralist context[20] and socially relevant too.

Mary who was really Godsend companion in the sense that it was Rev. Fr. Burck, my spiritual director, who was instrumental in getting her as my life partner. After our wedding, she not only gave up her teaching post in order to take all the family responsibilities with utmost care and foresight, rare administrative ability and astute understanding in home affairs but also she cooperated with me in all the extension activities of the Department and those of the Commission. Not the least is the part played by our sons. They were both docile and pliable children. They also extended their active collaboration with us right from their school days, each one contributing in one's own way to the success of all the programmes, be they cultural events to promote communal harmony or the various seminars, workshops and conferences. In fact my house was the 'real' office for both the University Department and the archdiocesan Commission for Dialogue. Perhaps it is their active involvement in my socio-religious programmes that was mainly responsible for two of them to positively respond to the priestly call, of whom we are proud: Rev. Fr. Varan Vardhan is a diocesan priest belonging to Madurai Archdiocese, now serving as professor of Philosophy in St. Paul's Major Seminary. The other is Rev. Fr. Diravya Rupen SDB serving as a missionary in Lusaka, Zambia. The Lord who 'lost' a labourer in his Vineyard at that time, now gained 'two' instead!

20 Already during the period of my research I had received many invitations to contribute articles to recognized research journals like the *Journal of Dharma* (Bangalore), *Indian Theological Studies*, *Indian Missiological Review* (Shillong). I must acknowledge my indebtedness to that 'happy group' of research scholars like Rev. Fr. A. K. Chirapanath and K. M. Mathew. We would sit for hours to discuss the problems threadbare before finalising a draft for publication. Besides my membership in professional bodies like the Indian Philosophical Congress, and Association of Christian Philosophers of India, Indian Society of Gandhian Studies, World Fellowship of Inter Religious Councils helped to test my findings research. Furthermore, in the very first seminar he organized exclusively for the laity in 1979, Rev. Fr. Amalorpavadass, the founder Director of NBCLC, spotted me and gave me a strong footing to my new thinking. Since then he had been giving me consistently opportunities to be a resource person in the numerous seminars he organized in the NBCLC. I must give a major credit to the national Centre for making me a lay leader recognized by the bishops, religious, priests and the laity. My close association with Rev. Fr. Ignatius Hirudayam, the founder Director of Aykiya Alayam authenticated the new path I was carving in my research, and gave me an assurance that I was actually toeing safely and securely in line with Church's Renewal.

6. Gandhi, an Exemplar of Total Integration

The more I experimented with applying Gandhian thought both in my writing and in my outreach activities of the Department, the greater I became convinced that Gandhi was not only setting a new path for an integrated living of my Christian commitment but also much more, by giving me a solid philosophical base. First and foremost I could see in Gandhi a definite antidote to the triple dichotomy mentioned above.

6.1. At the Intra-Personal Level

Gandhi appealed to me as the most integral person, providing and at the same time instilling confidence in a weakling like me from humble origins. Mohandas was not born *Mahatma*, neither was he made a *Mahatma*. There was nothing spectacular about him in his early years: physically puny, intellectually average, emotionally hot tempered, psychologically shy and timid, attitudinally very worldly and morally weak, he succumbed to all the vices a teenager is used to (smoking, lying, stealing, he even once visited a brothel house and attempted suicide).[21] The only extraordinary quality in him was his utter truthfulness to self, playing Harischandra at every moment of his life, and listening to the dictates of his conscience.

Thanks to this one extraordinary quality, he was able to accept every one of his shortcomings. Yet without being caught up in an inferiority complex, he could find an alternative to each of his imperfections and perfect himself.[22] Could he not be a contemporary example of St. Paul's witness to the Lord's words: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9)? If such an ordinary person like Mohan could transform himself into the stature of a world-recognized saint, why not I? This was how I was emboldened in my spiritual growth.

From the standpoint of philosophy too, I found Gandhi's definition of 'self' to be unique, contributing to a deeper level of spirituality. As

21 "The Universal Spirit and Indigenous Leader," *Vaiharai (The Dawn) A Theological Quarterly (*Tiruchiraplli: St. Paul's Seminary,3/1, January1998), 36-56.

22 "The Image of a Liberated Person: A Gandhian Perspective" *Vaiharai (The Dawn) A Theological Quarterly (*2/4, October 1997), 229-55.

against the commonly accepted definition of human nature in Western History of Philosophy, i.e., in terms of two components: Animality (*genus)* and Rationality (*species),* Gandhi insists that human reason cannot be a decisive principle or distinguishing mark of humankind, because it is ambiguous and precarious.[23] In his view, the Spirit within "is indeed the privilege of man and it distinguishes him from the brute creation."[24] The other two principles must be made subservient to this higher principle. Thus Gandhi defines human nature with three components (animality, rationality and divinity) as constitutive principles. It is only when the divine spark is made effulgent in such a way that it reigns supreme, governing the other two components, that the human being is said to be true to its nature.

In other words, to be 'truthful' for humans or to be authentically human means to regulate one's bodily appetites and mental faculties under the guidance of the spirit, and thereby make the divine spark more effulgent. It is perhaps the same thing meant by Pope Francis' Magisterium: "We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being."[25] The same point was contained in the observation made by St. Pope John Paul II: the human "is a person in the unity of his body and his spirit. The body can never be reduced to mere matter: it is a *spiritualized body*, just as the human spirit is so closely united to the body that one can be described as an *embodied spirit.*"[26]

23 It is ambiguous because it can support either the animal appetites in the human, making sensual gratification unnatural, or it can also support the higher goal of life and yearning to be more and more perfect in life. The rational faculty of humans is also a precarious faculty, Gandhi argues, because, whereas all animal impulses are limited by nature, and they all behave according to the limits set by nature, the human power of reason can manipulate the natural impulses in such a way that one may try to fulfil them far beyond the limits set by nature, thereby making you stoop down to a level, far worse than the animals, which is a demonic in status, what we in India call *asura* level.

24 M.K. Gandhi in *Harijan,* April 2, 1938.

25 Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium*, (2014), 8.

26 John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, *Gratissimam Sane,(*1994), 19.

6.2. At the Societal Level

There is no "individual salvation" at all for Gandhi. For him, service of humanity was a necessary part of one's self-realization. Even while he wrote in the Autobiography,"What I want to achieve – what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years – is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain *Moksha*";[27] he also points out clearly elsewhere, "I could not attain that goal unless I concentrate myself on serving them. If I could persuade myself that I should find Him in a Himalayan cave I would proceed there immediately. But I know that I cannot find Him apart from humanity."[28] In other words for Gandhi it was a praxis-oriented attainment of religious goal that was uppermost.

This explains why Gandhi was fully involved in the liberation of all kinds of weaker sections that he came across at different phases of his life: first, the Indian indentured labourers in South Africa,[29] then on his return to India, the peasants' problems in Champaran, Kheda and Bardoli, the industrial labourers' strike in Ahmedabad,[30] the teeming millions of the poor and the Untouchables, and finally the political liberation struggle against the British Raj.[31]It must be noted that Gandhi initiated liberation movements at a time when the term liberation theology was not even coined.[32]

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27 M.K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1976 edition), x.

28 *Harijan,* 29.8.1936, p. 226. Cited in Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Selections from Gandhi* (1972; repr., Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1948), 25.

29 Cf. M.K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa* (Ahmedbad: Navajivan Publishing House 1928, repr. 1950).

30 For details about Champaran Satyagraha, Kheda Satyagraha and Bardholi Satyagrahas and of Ahmedabad Satyagrha, one may easily refer to Joan V. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence : The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, (Bomaby: OUP, 1959).

31 "Annal Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar: A Comparative Study" (in Tamil) in *The AMA Educational Trust – The Inauguration Souvenir* (SC/ST Commission, Madurai, Aug. 1990), 52-64; Please also see "Gandhi and Ambedkar Befriending the Other" a paper presented in the International Conference Nov. 2015) on Befriending the Other, in Pune, Jnana-DeepaVidyapeet, likely to be brought out in a book form shortly.

32 "Gandhi's Non-Violence: Significance for Christian Philosophizing," in *Violence and its Victims, A Challenge to Philosophizing in the Indian Context*, ed., Ivo Coelho (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, ACPI Series 11, 2010), 117-50.

It was indeed a surprise and a shock to observe that it was Gandhi, who for the first time in human history, placed the maxim of the 'Sermon on the Mount' in the political field. He is much more Christic-oriented in his discovery of the *satyagraha* method. It is mainly thanks to the inspiration he got from the Third Way[33] suggested by our Master in his Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:39-41) that Gandhi developed the technique of *satyagraha* with almost scientific precision, and experimented with it first in South Africa, later in all the local struggles and finally in the political liberation of India. All Gandhi's *satyagraha* movements were anchored on two basic features: (a) 'being endowed with God' (the *Sat*) and (b) 'clinging to' (*graha)* and thus making Truth into to a 'force or power.'

The most significant contribution of Gandhi is that he makes use of nonviolence as the technique of loving the enemy/oppressor or evil doer. Here Gandhi's belief is exactly like our Lord Jesus' command: "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven" (Mt.5: 43-45). But Gandhi goes further to give a philosophical basis for this maxim of our Lord. The so called enemy/oppressor is actually your own brother/sister, erring although. Just because my sister erred once, may be by chance, will I put up a board at the entrance of my house: "Here is a prostitute!" Extending the same sort of attitude to our social relationships, Gandhi asks us to show our concern and love to an erring brother or sister and our oppressors too, without stigmatizing them as evil. This does not mean that one compromises with evil. One has to resist evil with a firm soul-force including voluntary suffering, so that there may be more of a possibility of correction for that fallible one. What is important for an Indian Christian is the realization that Gandhi "has evolved basically a religious perspective with a threefold structural framework of rootedness in truth (*satyagraha*), at-one-ness with life (*ahimsa*) and social praxis and vision (*swaraj*)."[34]

33 Walter Wink, makes an elaborate discussion on the third way in Chapter 2, *Violence and Nonviolence in South Africa,* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1987), 12-23.

34 George Pattery, *Gandhi, the Believer*: *An Indian Christian Perspective*, (Delhi: ISPCK,1996), 12.

6.3. At the Intra-Religious Realm

Gandhi was personally rooted in the traditional Vaishnava faith. But he was not a fanatic Hindu. He was well exposed to other faith traditions. He not only loved and tolerated them, but respected them: Shaivism, Jainism, Buddhism, Islam, Parsism and Christianity. This did not mean that he was an eclectic. It was only after making a very serious study of various religions[35] that he took a clear decision to be a Hindu and even claimed to be a *Sanatana* Hindu.

Having decided to be a Hindu, he openly acknowledged the utter need of Hinduism to reform many of its imperfections, such as the age old untouchability and blood sacrifices. No wonder that he made an attempt to bring about an accord between his religious belief and the actual state of affairs. As it advocated the doctrine of *advaita,* he said 'all human beings are divine in essence and are called to be one with divinity.' However in practice the problem of untouchability prevailing in society was utterly in contradiction with belief. To bridge the gap between Hindu belief and practice, Gandhi made a lot of attempts.[36] He even spent nearly a yearlong tour called "Harijan tour" to conscientize fellow believers of his religion regarding the problem. In fact the sharp difference between Dr. Ambedkar and Gandhi arose mainly because Gandhi saw the Dalit problem as a religious problem and so tried to solve it religiously, while Ambedkar wanted to solve it politically.[37] Gandhi condemned the Hindu castes for leaning on the *Shastras* in support of this injustice and inhumanity.[38] He argued that the disparity and cruelty was even against human rights. Likewise

35 "Gandhi's Contribution to Inter-Religious Harmony," *Sanyasa Journal of Consecrated Life* Vol.VI No.2 (July-December, 2011): 192-206.

36 "Gandhi and Ambedkar Befriending the Other" to be published in *Gandhi Marg.*

37 "Liberation of Untouchables: A Corporative Study of the Gandhian Techniques with Ambedkar's" in *Gandhian Techniques for the Liberation of the Weaker Sections*, ed. K. Arunachalam and S. Jayapragasam (Madurai: Sarvodaya Ilakkya Pannai, 1987), 184-216; "Gandhiji and Dr. Ambedkar: A Comparative Study," in (Tl) *The AMA Educational Trust–The Inauguration Souvenir* (Madurai: SC/ST Commission, Aug. 1990), 40-51; "Gandhi and Ambedkar Befriending the Other" (Pune: Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth, 2016).

38 "Harijans and Prospects of their Human Rights," *Journal of Dharma* Vol. VIII No. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1983), 391-405.

Gandhi's attempt to uplift the condition of women in Hindu society was certainly an integral attempt to liberate the Hindu religion and society from its degenerate practices.[39]

6.4. At the Inter-Religious Level

At one time Gandhi was desirous of converting himself to Christianity. But he told himself: "I will wait upon God." He made a serious study of religions; not simply a theoretical study but always putting into practice whatever new insight he learnt from other religions. Finally he chose to remain a Hindu. And he gave reasons for his choice of religious living. As a result of his deep study of various religions, he was convinced of two things: (1) morality is the basis of all religions; (2) Truth is the substance of all morality.

6.4.1. Morality: The Basis of All Religions

For Gandhi religion and morality are intimately interrelated. They are inseparably bound to each other. He compared religion and morality to water and seed sown in the soil. The essence of religion is morality. Often he considered them identical. When morality incarnates itself in a living man, it becomes religion, because it binds, it holds, it sustains him in the hours of his trials. To judge whether a doctrine is religious or not, the criterion he used was morality. He did not consider a man religious if he violated moral laws. As soon as one loses the moral basis one ceases to be religious.

Obviously then, Gandhi was very concerned about hypocrisy found amongst religious people. In the very 'Introduction' of his book titled *Ethical Religion*[40] Gandhi lamented thus: "Hypocrisy has nowadays increased in the world. Whatever a man's religion he thinks of only its outward form and fails in his real (moral) duty."[41] This is unfortunate, Gandhi feels. Hence we should take ethics seriously as 'ethics tells us

39 "Gandhi's Approach to Women's Liberation," *Journal of Dharma* Vol. XIII No.1 (Jan.-Mar.1988), 39-63.

40 It is just a booklet, a collection of articles Gandhi wrote in his weekly *Indian Opinion* in 1907. Those articles themselves were paraphrased from William Slater's book *Ethical Religion* (Chicago, 1889).

41 M.K. Gandhi, *Ethical Religion* (Ahmadabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1968), 3.

what it ought to be. It enables man to know how he should act.' He corroborates it with a quotation from a thinker: "If you wish to attain perfection, you must begin from this very day to live according to the laws of morality at any cost."[42] So Gandhi's appeal is this: "People professing any religion should adhere to their own faith more strictly and pay greater attention to its moral teaching." If not, it will mean an end to all order in the world and ultimate destruction;[43] hence Gandhi's insistence on *ethical religion.*

At the same time, Gandhi was aware of the fact that there can be ethical variances. To quote the latest authority on the recognition of this variance, Pope Francis said recently: "what seems normal for a bishop on one continent, is considered strange and almost scandalous – almost! – for a bishop from another; what is considered a violation of a right in one society is an evident and inviolable rule in another."[44] Not only morally but also religiously and culturally people will be varied, and the variety is existential necessity. It is against such a background that Gandhi's insistence on the notion of 'truth' is unique and significant.

6.4.2. Truth: The Substance of All Morality

Gandhi's emphasis on morality in religion was not for the sake of mere moralistic considerations or to promote absolute moral goodness. Gandhi's conviction regarding the perfectibility of human nature is not merely a moral conviction but is really based upon metaphysical views, theistic[45] as well as advaitic.[46]

42 Ibid., 5.

43 Ibid., 3-4.

44 Francis, *Address at the Conclusion of the Synod on the Family. 2015*,http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151024_sinodo-conclusione-lavori.html

45 His theistic argument would run like his: If we are all sons of the same God, and partake of the same divine essence, we must partake of the sin of every person whether he belongs to us or to another race," *Young India*, Oct. 1931.

46 His advaitic argument would run in this way: "I believe in *advaita.* I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives. Therefore I believe that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and, if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent." *Young India,* (4 December, 1924), 398.

But it is unique of Gandhi that he went far beyond the 'theistic' or 'advaitic' categories of thought, and gave a metaphysical foundation which would include all categories of people: theists, atheists and agnostics. Gandhi called that foundation as the 'Truth' for want of a better term. But his preference was for the Indian term *Satya,* derived from the root, *Sat* (To be) and *ya* (being endowed with). The Sanskrit term *Sat* is the same as the Latin term *Esse,* which is said to have the 'transcendental attributes' *unum, verum* and *bonum* (unity, *truth,* and goodness) in Aristotelian philosophy. Any 'thing' merely because it is existent, it is a being, and in so far as it is a being, it has properties or qualities that are ascribable to all beings in as much as they are beings. Aristotle called them transcendental, because they transcend each of the categories of thought, and their range and scope are equal to 'being' itself. They are the properties that necessarily accompany being and thus are found in every being.

Of the three transcendental attributes, the most basic is Truth, what we theists call God: "I am who I am." It is precisely this that Gandhi calls '*Satya.'* Gandhi calls it 'Absolute Truth' (AT), which means that it is 'cut off' from all the temporal and spatial conditions of life. However, this Truth, as experienced by humankind is bound to be relative because we are imprisoned in this mortal frame. Gandhi calls this truth relative truth (RT).

The distinction between AT and RT is very crucial in Gandhi's philosophy, as it will be made clear shortly. But here it must be borne in mind that Gandhi uses the term 'relative' not in the sense of being relativistic, but only in the sense of being 'relational.' When Truth is revealed to human beings, it is received 'in relation' to our subjective conditions as well as the variety of our contexts: cultural, societal, historical and geographical. To put it in his own words: "Relative truth is the truth as we perceive it in relation to a particular set of circumstances. It is not the whole truth. What may be true under one set of circumstances may not be true in relation to a different set of circumstances." Thus, there could be any number of relative truths: RT_1, RT_2, RT_3, and so on till RT_n.

All these RTs will have a participatory relationship with Absolute Truth in so far as the AT is manifested to everyone in relation to our own space, time and condition and in so far as the different RTs continue to remain in relationship with the AT. Relative Truth is the truth of the Absolute manifested to you here and now. Therefore Gandhi's Relative Truth does not lead to ethical relativism. While relativism advocates that there is no absolute truth and that everything is relative, Gandhi's Relative Truth does not advocate that any individual can follow any theory as one likes according to one's whims and fancies. It only claims that Truth, when revealed to human beings, is perceived differently in relation to the different conditions of the recipients. What appear to be different truths are like the countless and apparently different leaves of the same tree. Even if there is a mistake on the part of any one following Truth, it will be automatically set right because of *tapas*, a self-suffering even unto death.

The distinction between AT and the RT may be best explained by Gandhi's favorite comparison with the notion of Euclid's Point. By definition, Euclid's Point is indivisible, an ideal. It can never be realized here on earth. But just because it is never realizable, it does not mean that you need not sharpen your pencil or that you can draw the point in any way you like. On the contrary it impels you to make all attempts to approximate it. The more you sharpen your pencil, the more closely your point will be to the ideal, and you will also get the triangle with more accurate angles.

The implication for our moral life is enormous. Just because the AT, the most Perfect Being, the Perfect consistency of thought, word and action is never realizable in you or in the world, it does not mean that you can be licentious in your actions, conduct and life. The ideal compels you all the more to think without bias or rash judgment, as much as possible to speak as accurately and precisely and do things as rigorously as possible so that you move towards greater and greater consistency and perfection. One has to be steadfast in upholding truth, whether it is 'truth-thinking,' 'truth-telling' or 'truth-doing.'

Another implication of Relative truth is that it involves self-suffering on the part of the seeker. What appears to be truth to one person will

appear as untruth to another person. This is bound to be the case since the human mind works through innumerable media and since the evolution of the mind is not the same for all. Hence, RTs are different for different people, and so tolerance is a necessity. In fact, for Gandhi the golden rule of conduct is mutual tolerance. We all will never think alike and we shall see Truth in fragments and from different angles of vision. So, conscience is not the same thing for all. While it is a good guide for individual conduct, imposition of that conduct upon all will be an insufferable interference with everybody's freedom of conscience. If at all one wants to establish that the other is at fault, and that one wants to vindicate what one says as truth is truth, one will have to show it only through the path of suffering. Herein lay the value of prayer, fasting, persuasion, negotiation, dialogue etc. In a word, non-violence for Gandhi flows as metaphysical exigency from the distinction between AT and RT, and not simply as a strategically expedient weapon.

From the epistemological standpoint too Gandhi's concept of Truth can be explained thus. Let us start with the most common way of understanding. By truth we ordinarily mean 'truth-telling' (correspondence between what is said and what is really the case). In other words, "I am telling truth" means that "what I said accords with the fact." When another approves of it as truth, it means that what I said was in accordance with the fact as he too perceived it. When many others also agree to what I said as true then it is that they all perceived the fact as I did. In other words truthfulness means that my perception must be as unbiased and as objective as possible, and that expression must also accord in the sense that the words are chosen duly and vigilantly, and are uttered conscientiously. That involves my deeds also to be in accordance in the sense that I must make an effort to perceive it without bias or prejudice and to express it with proper choice of words. In other words, 'truth telling' now entails that the so called accordance of my utterance with fact implies careful perception and making an effort to express it accurately.

Not infrequently people think that Gandhi's nonviolence was more an expedient strategy in achieving political liberation from the British. If we accept Gandhi's distinction of AT and the RTs, it follows

automatically that one RT can never impose one's perception of AT upon the other, because the other RT has its own light from the AT and is oriented to and responsible to AT. In sum, the whole of Gandhian thought seems to be a comprehensive spirituality touching all aspects of human thought and living: intra-personal, societal, intra-religious, and above all inter-religious.

7. Towards an Integral Thinking on Christian Discipleship

After getting to know the Integral thought of the well-integrated man that the world recognized as *Mahatma*, I began to explore whether his thought was viable to be the broad base on which I could build my philosophical edifice that would not only solve my queries pertaining to my faith-life in a multi-religious society but also become relevant to the socio-political problems of the nation. Not only was my attempt successful but also my Christian commitment became more integrated with the demands of the Gospel. This in turn deepened my true discipleship to my Master, Lord and Saviour. And I began to be more and more convinced of the real worth of Gandhian thought as an integral philosopher of religion, with immense possibility of application to all those problems that arise in a religiously pluralistic society and those that affect the socio-political, economic and ecological aspects of life.

7.1. Personal Level

After knowing Gandhi's definition of self, I began to see the necessity of giving a predominant position to the spirit-force within me rather than to the power of reason. In the process certain passages of the Scriptures which seemed most difficult became easily understandable now under the Gandhian light. For instance the task of 'education of conscience' which is very much highlighted in moral philosophy, seemed to me now from the Gandhian line of thinking just habituating oneself to abide by the guidance of the Spirit within, and listening to the voice of conscience instantly, obeying its dictates in all the minute details. In a word, one should never stifle its voice. The one verse that was an enigma to me for a long time was: "Every sin will be forgiven, but not the sin against the Holy Spirit (Mk.2:29). Granted that Jesus our Lord is the most compassionate Master and the universal Saviour,

how could he then make one sin beyond the purview of his saving power? This was the question that cropped up in my mind until I came across Gandhi's insistence on the necessity of abiding by our own RT continuously and always.

Suppose you erred on a particular occasion and that too by chance and simply out of human frailty; obviously the Spirit within will instantaneously tell you, "Get up and rectify it immediately." If you respond to it, well and good. Even if you fail next time, your Spirit will also be loudly correcting you. But, suppose you did not respond to the Spirit's promptings a couple of times, then the voice of the Spirit will turn out to be merely a whisper to you. If you persist in ignoring those whispers also, then a time may come when you will even be insensitive to the presence of the Spirit. Still later you would even begin to give false justifications for your evil deeds, words, and thoughts. Thus the more and more you stifle your conscience, the farther and farther you will go from God's presence. In the process, a time may come when this soul cannot take a turn towards God at all. That is indeed a stage of utter condemnation of the soul by its own self. Though it is destined by its very nature to be in union with God always, now that it has fallen into such an abyss, it can never get up and behold the countenance of God. This is indeed self-condemnation or self-negation such that nobody can save you, not even God. This is precisely the impossible situation that Jesus implies in Mk. 3:28. So Gandhi's injunction is, "What is within your control is your RT. Accept it joyfully and abide by it incessantly. Though the human person in the existing condition is an admixture of evil tendencies and inherent goodness, a rare combination of imperfect body and self-conscious spirit, a truly liberated person is one who succeeds in bringing about an organic, integral and harmonious development of all the parts by making the animal aspects and rational faculties subservient to the spirit or divine element.

7.2. Intra-Religious Level

Looking back at my village experience, I am inclined to say that my villagers (Christians), from the moral point of view of the Vth, VIth and IXth commandments, were far superior to other villages belonging

to other religions. This means that violence in the sense of killing humans or chopping of the limbs of people just as you cut a branch of a tree, or manifest cases of adultery or fornication, etc., were not at all there in our Christian community. However for all other purposes they were no different from our other Hindu neighbours. They lived a life of many shortcomings: gossiping, lying, stealing, quarrelling, indulging in petty cases of cheating, jealousy, caste discrimination, ill-treating the elders, etc. They were all staunch believers in the atonement theory and therefore would regularly take recourse to the sacrament of reconciliation. They were quite busy with many pious activities organized at the parish level. But still I could not see much visible change in their life. They were just like the Plymouth Brothers who argued with Gandhi: Sin we must, because it is impossible for us to be sin-less but we are peaceful and happy because we believe in the atonement theory."[47]

However Gandhi was not ready to accept that kind of Christian belief. He retorted to those Plymouth Brothers thus: "I do not seek redemption from the consequences of my sin. I seek to be redeemed from sin itself or from the very thought of sin. Until I have attained that end," he said, "I shall be content to be restless." Still later Gandhi commented that, "asking for forgiveness means that we should not sin again and the grant of forgiveness means that we would have power to resist all temptation."It is like a murderer who is convicted with a life sentence submitting a mercy petition, implying thereby that he would never commit that brutal act again. And it is only after assuring for certain his power to resist all temptations that his request is granted to change the life sentence into life imprisonment. Hence Gandhi says, "it is only after a persistent, untiring effort that God comes to our rescue as a wall of protection."[48] "So long as there is a single evil thought coming to our mind, we must conclude that there is not complete forgiveness or grace."[49] Here I was thoroughly challenged to grasp the real import of my religious practice of taking recourse

47 M.K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography,* 11.

48 *Young India*, Dec.22, 1927. For easy access, M.K. Gandhi, *The Message of Jesus Christ* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1963), 48.

49 Ibid.

to the sacrament of Reconciliation much more profoundly than any traditional spiritual theologian.

7.3. Inter-Religious Level

When I came to know more deeply Gandhi's rejoinders, I realized that the so-called uniqueness I was claiming about the 'Jesus event' became meaningless to me in the way I have been doing in the past. For instance as a boy I used to tell my Hindu classmates that Jesus Christ was only one religious founder who died and yet rose from the dead. And I thought I was making a point to establish the uniqueness of my Master. But to such a claim Gandhi's riposte was: "Do not then preach about the God of history, but show him as he lives today through you." If historicity was the main concern of the Christian mission, Gandhi says, the history department in the University would do a better job. You don't need missionaries for it. "It would be a poor comfort to the world, if it had to depend upon a historical God who died 2,000 years ago. God did not bear the Cross only 1900 years ago, but he bears it today, and he dies and is resurrected from day to day."[50]

Likewise, about the birth of Jesus Christ too, Gandhi expected us to show it as 'an ever-recurring event enacted in every life' rather than merely remembering the nativity of Jesus on Christmas day and celebrating it during the Christmas season. Once while giving a Christmas message to a Christian group, Gandhi told them boldly: "Though we sang 'All glory to God on high and on earth be peace' there seems to be today neither glory to God nor peace on earth." What he meant was that only when real peace echoed in our life, not only in individual life, but in corporate life, can we really say that Christ is born. "That to me is the real meaning of the verse we have sung,"[51] he remarked.

Moreover, the Sermon on the Mount has been traditionally interpreted as useful for private perfection only. However Gandhi was the first person in history to have taken the Sermon seriously so as to apply it actively into politics, and achieve great success. Today a Scripture scholar like Walter Wink is able to analyse Mt.5:39-41 in a way that

50 M.K. Gandhi, *The Message of Jesus Christ*, 37-38.

51 M.K. Gandhi, *In Search of the Supreme Vol.III* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1962), 316.

it teaches a third way of Jesus inviting us to oppose injustice in a non-violent way.[52] But even 100 years before, Gandhi found precisely the same import that Walter Wink is talking about. So, non-violence for Gandhi was not a strategy born out of expediency, but a truly spiritual weapon, the potentiality of which the Christian world did not realize as applicable to aspects of life other than the private interaction of those who were aspiring to achieve greater perfection in life. How fittingly does Will Durant, in his *Story of Civilization* comment sharply that "he [Gandhi] did not mouth the name of Christ, but acted as if he accepted every word on the Sermon on the Mount."[53]

Also about the overall pride of the western Christians that they were destined to be a superior race to rule the whole world as imperialists and colonialists, Gandhi made a bold stance to warn them of their lopsided value system. Even when we were just under their political bondage, Gandhi could tell them: "Confuse not Jesus' teaching with what passes as modern civilization... In spite of your belief in the greatness of Western civilization and in spite of your pride in all your achievements, I plead with you for humility."[54] It was not part of their missionary call "to tear the lives of the people of the East by its roots. Tolerate whatever is good in them and do not hastily, with your preconceived notions, judge them. Do not judge lest you be judged yourselves." This sort of plea by Gandhi makes me sympathetic to my own Eastern roots and helps rebuild my Christian faith in an inculturated form rather than judging them all as evil and satanic.

Especially the 'Gospel of Truth' that Gandhi proclaimed is very handy to deal with the interreligious problems, promoting the "Religion" at the same time safeguarding the plurality of 'religions' just in the same way as Aristotle and the scholastic philosophy would deal with the problem of universals vis-à-vis the particulars. [55]

52 Walter Wink, *Violence and Nonviolence in South Africa* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1987), 12-23.

53 Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1935).

54 M.K. Gandhi, *Christian Missions: Their Place in India,* Compiled Barathan Kumarappa (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1960), 121.

55 "Mahatma Gandhi's Gospel of Truth Enabling Interreligious Dialogue," in *Discipleship and Dialogue: New Frontiers in Interfaith Engagement*, ed., Eric J. Lott, M.T. Thangaraj & A. Wingate (Delhi: Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge 2013), 260-77.

7.4. In National Life

The political liberation of India, according to Gandhi, was not to be merely a 'liberation from' the British bondage, but it was to be 'liberation for' its own self-fulfilment, purged of all its evils from within, and standing on its own legs. This is why he called it "*Swaraj*" self-rule. So, he proposed Constructive Programmes, eighteen in number.[56] Liberated India was to be to be steered on spiritual principles and truly become the Kingdom of God. That is why he named it as "*Rama Rajya*." By this term, Gandhi did not mean restoration of the reign of Ram, the Son of Dasharatha,[57] but the one considered to be the embodiment of all the great qualities of righteousness, justice, compassion, etc. This almost coincides with today's understanding of our mission as spreading the values of the Kingdom of God rather than expanding the boundaries of the Church. So, I am even inclined to think, that if only we, the Indian Christians, with a powerful band of consecrated people like the Conference of Religious in India, clergy, etc., re-dedicate ourselves to make the Constructive Programme as our main Missionary activity, perhaps our mission would be much more creative and constructive, appropriate to the Indian context. That would definitely ease the missionary crisis that is spreading fast among the religious today.

7.5. At the Ecological Level

Today after the release of the magisterium of Pope Francis, *Laudato Sí*, there is so much of awareness created among us Christians about the ecological mission. But it is unique of Gandhi to have expressed his ecological concerns even when the term 'ecological crisis' was not much talked about. Gandhi rightly judged that modernisation and industrialisation, whether advocated by socialist policies or by

56 The basic programme of Communal Unity, Five Educational Programmes (New or Basic Education, Adult Education, Education of Health and Hygiene, Provincial Languages and National Language), Three Purificatory Programmes (Prohibition, Removal of Untouchability and Village Sanitation), Three Economic (Economic Equality, Khadi and Other Village industries), Six Programmes on Social sectors (Farmers, Labourers, Adivasis, Lepers, Women and Students).

57 "Rama Rajya: The Gandhian Versus The BJP Perspective," *Vaiharai (The Dawn): A Theological Quarterly* April 2/2 (1997), 112- 33.

capitalist politics, was seriously anti-ecological. He rightly observed that the so called 'modern development' was inbuilt with certain trends that were environmentally deteriorating and hence would lead to various aspects of environmental degradation.[58] Therefore, as against the basic perspectives and approaches of modernity and development, Gandhi proposed an ecological worldview[59] which promoted ecological sustainability, and his whole approach to nature was governed by deeply religious considerations.[60]

8. Concluding Remarks

The childhood queries which arose in my village setting, which indeed replicates in a sense the overall context of India, remained unanswered even during the philosophical and theological training which I was privileged to get during my early adulthood. It was in a totally different milieu, to which I was led again by providence and in encountering a person of great integration and unassuming spirituality, that I could experience the religious snags of my faith-living. Further again it was through providential design, that I came to see the philosophical worth and depth of a world-recognized *Mahatma* who might not have been technically known as a philosopher but who really proved to be a great philosopher of religion; who not only had integrated his own faith living in a multi-religious context but had taken pains to reconcile the truth claims of believers as well as those of non-believers, and co-opt them all into collaboration for establishing God's reign on earth.

Especially Gandhi's trans-religious description of God[61] as 'Truth'[62] and his trans-religious concept of spirituality[63] as 'truth-living,'

58 "Relevance of Gandhian Eco-Vision," *Journal of Dharma* Vol.31 No.4 (Oct.-Dec. 2006): 407-36.

59 *Ecological Worldview for a Just Society* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1992).

60 "Eco-Harmony & Economic Equity: A Vindication of Gandhian Economics," *Journal of Dharma* Vol. XVIII No. 4 (Oct.–Dec. 1993), 340-63.

61 "Gandhi's Trans-Religious Concept of God," in *Romancing the Sacred? Towards an Indian Christian Philosophy of Religion* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2007), 373-403.

62 "Il Contributo di Gandhi ad una compressione Trans-Religiosa di Dio (Italian) (The contribution of Gandhi to a Trans-religious Understanding of God)," *Le Syolta Planetaria dii Dio (*Roma: Editioni Borla, 1992), 173-91.

63 "Trans-Religious Spirituality of Gandhi," in *Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies,* Vol.7 No.2 (July 2004), 29-43.

variously named as Attainment, Self-Realization, Moksha, Perfection or Transcendence, were indeed unique discoveries of Gandhi, which he evolved from praxis-centred liberation movements. If this is taken to be the essence of religion, the 'Religion' or the 'Truth' in a non-denominational sense, then it is applicable to all 'religions' and even to 'no-religion-frameworks,' provided that the latter are potentially able to give rise to saints, actual lives of attainment and self-realized souls.

Moreover, Gandhi's distinction between the AT and RT, identified with the universal 'R' and the particular 'r's (or as the individual approximation of the universal) gives us a parameter to validate a religion and see whether it is really a religion or not. Granted that if 'R' or 'T' or God is 'the universal' that validates the particular religions, then a specific 'r' (religion) is valid only in so far as it is able to realize the 'R' or 'T' within its own boundaries, and in so far as there is a constant endeavor to approximate its RT with AT. Now, the objective criterion to find out whether a particular 'r' is closer to 'R' or not, is according to Gandhi the fact of saints. To put it differently, what is required is to see whether there are people who have attained a disciplined way of life, and achieved the life of Peace amidst peace-less-ness, Transcendence amid transitory-ness, Perfection despite imperfections, Realization, Attainment, etc.

Further, granted that the 'fact of saints,' the life of attainment, is the objective test to find out the presence of 'R' in particular 'r-s,' and that the variety of 'r-s' is also necessary in the present condition of humankind, then, I believe, there is a Gandhian epistemological foundation, strong enough to consider the Theology of Religions as a valid science.[64]

Further, in so far as this Attainment, according to Gandhi, is impossible to achieve without societal connectivity, it follows also that involvement in liberation-movements is a necessary adjunct for a Christian commitment to be authentic. The involvement may be direct as in the case of the South American Theologians or the Dalit theologians in India, or indirect as in the case of the spirituality of

64 Cf., a thesis guided by me on the basis of my paper, footnote 14, above.

St. Theresa of Child Jesus or St. Teresa of Kolkata.[65] This explains why various themes of research I had initiated my research scholars into societal themes.[66] Above all, my own publications could all be classified into those that pertain to familial challenges, societal problems like the Dalits issue and Women's position, national issues like communalism, and ecological balance.[67] Ultimately they all have led me to a re-interpretation of Christian mission today either by way of inculturation[68] or by way of responding to the call of the Church[69] the socio-politico situation of the nation,[70] re-reading of my Master's mission[71] so as to present Him to a multi-religious context of India much more meaningfully, without belittling the traditional claim of His uniqueness, rather re-visioning it in a much more radical way than the oral proclamation of it.[72]

Could I therefore provisionally say that my philosophical search, rooted in my Christian faith and trodden through the Gandhian road has

65 Edward Ramani's Thesis on Mother Teresa was completed under my guidance submitted to Madurai Kamaraj University, and awarded too.

66 To mention a few as illustrations: "A Critical Study of Liberation Theology in India: Theory and Practice" by Arul Arasu, "Critique of Religion in Contemporary Indian Philosophy with special reference to Dr. B R Ambedkar," by S. Lourdunathan, "Appearance and Reality: Women's Liberation in Islam and Christianity," by Seshuraja, "Women, Ecology and Religion and their Relationship in Contemporary Society," by K. Fatima Mary, "Gandhi and Francis of Assisi," by Nitya Sahayam; all submitted to Madurai Kamaraj university and awarded too.

67 See the list of publications attached separately in this Volume.

68 "Inculturation in Paraliturgical Celebrations," *Journal of Indian Theology* (Bangalore: Tejas Vidhya Peetha, Vol. IX, No.1, Jan.-Ap. 2016), 59-83.

69 "New Evangelization and the Role of the Laity," in *Becoming Witnesses To The Gospel: The Call to New Evangelization*, eds., Isaac Padinjarekuttu, Thomas Manjaly and Tomy Palely (Shillong: Oriens Publications, 2013), 343-66.

70 "Mission of the Christian Community amidst Emergence of Hindutva Ideology," *Third Millennium Indian Journal of Evangelization (*Rajkot: Bishop's House, September, 2016).

71 "Gandhi's Tolerance for Religious Pluralism: A Pointer to Re-Reading of Jesus' Mission," *Jeevadhara: A Journal for Socio Religious Research* (Kottayam: Vol XLVI No 273, 2016), 44-65.

72 "Professing the Unique Lordship of Jesus in a Religiously Pluralist Context – A Lay Perspective" in *Mission and Religious Pluralism*, ed., WS Milton Jeganathan (Chennai: The Department of Mission and Evangelism of Church of South India,2003), 177-91.

culminated in a philosophical theology, giving birth to an integration of Gandhian-Christian consciousness, very much concerned with various dimensions of an Indian Christian's faith, living the personal, societal and intra-religious as well as interreligious problems in a multi-religious nation, extending its ambit to the upkeep of an egalitarian society, and finally leading to the environmental health, the one all-inclusive home?[73]

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73 In light of all these achievements, if they may be called so, then the whole of my life in retrospect seems to be the illustration of the one idea that there is an overarching plan of God for every one of us which he unravels to the seeker at the proper time. One may also claim my life and thought proves the adage that, "God writes straight with crooked lines." Yes, my life is a proof that this Plan-Designer is an all-powerful and all-knowing facilitator who alone can write straight even with crooked lines, drawn by humans like my Archbishop Justin Dhiraviam. One feels like singing St. Augustine's classical hymn, *Exultet*, slightly changing a phrase: "Oh, *Felix Culpa* of Archbishop, Justin Diraviam!" In retrospect, I can clearly say today that even through the mistakes of superiors God reveals his plan to his sincere devotees, provided that they are sincere to Him and take things in their stride, especially when things go beyond their control, with as profound a faith as that of Abraham. It is perhaps in a similar fashion that St. Paul, summing up his own life experiences might have this exclamation: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose!" (Rom. 8:28).

ENHANCING THE HOME OF INDIA THROUGH INTERRELIGIOUS RELATIONS

Prof. Pushparajan's Contribution as a Gandhian

John Peter Vallabadoss, OFMCap

Abstract: *India has been a 'home' of diverse traditions. Despite diversity and differences that have given rise to conflicts and confrontations, Indian 'home' has catered to interaction, accommodation, assimiliation and adaptation. Spirit of interreligious relations has always prevailed over moments of strife and struggle, without losing sight of the pluralist character of Indianness. As a true son of the soil, Gandhi had life experiences of defending his religious tradition with active interaction with other traditions. His career as lawyer and political leader, helped Gandhi to show signs of interreligious interaction with rootedness to his tradition and openness to others, with critiquing, understanding, appreciating and accommodating them. Common goals of freedom, peace and harmony guided his interreligious encounters. Inspired by Gandhian ideals, Prof. Pushparajan took up the life journey of interreligious interactions, supported by Vatican conciliar and postconciliar climate of relating with other religions. Arguing for 'dialogue of life,' promoting peace and harmony, finding common grounds, working for justice and value-based society, encouraging laity involvement and training youth and children for interreligious relations, he opens up new vistas in field of interreligious dialogue.*

* * * * * * *

Introduction

The 'religious home' of India has given birth, accommodated and enriched lives of people belonging to different cultures, religions, languages and ethnicities. History of religions in India cannot overlook the interaction and encounter the religions have had from the beginning, along with its development. Indian sub-continent has always accommodated different, even opposing religious, cultural, linguistic, social, political and philosophic traditions, accepting them not as opposed processes, but as alternative possibilities, in the panoramic order of vast possibilities as so many shining stars in the horizon of humankind's vision of life and thought. Gandhian life and activities reflect his effort to keep up the spirit of India as the *home of religions* and uphold its plurality through active interaction with other traditions. In the light of Gandhian ideals and practices we attempt to illustrate the contribution of Professor Pushparajan in the field of interreligious interactions.

1. Indian Home of Diversity

In accommodating the Vedic, Persian, Semitic, European religious traditions, India nourished and nurtured and developed progressive attitude towards religions, though not without resistance and confrontations.[1] From the ancient period of interaction of Vedic tradition with indigenous traditions, through medieval *bhakti* movements to the reformist movements in the colonial period, all speak of inter religious phenomenon, either in terms of assertion and reaction, or acceptance and rejection. A 'hermeneutic' of the land, interpreting the geography of India as the home of diverse traditions help us construct a 'home' of differences with its cultural, historical and geographical sensibilities. Indian diversity is neither exhaustive nor exclusive. The composite picture of Indian civilizations has different cultures with their local roots and peculiarities. Due to cultural geography, demographic migration and immigration over the centuries an element of compositeness emerges in India. The complexity of physical nature, life-world and human mind is so

1 Anil Kumar Sarkar, "Preface," *Dynamic Facets of Indian Thought* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1988), ix.

enormous that it is futile to follow a single method for comprehending all the aspects of the world in which we are situated. In India there is no bewildering by the variety and complexity. The elements and forces in the world and the mind-body-spirit complex in us enable us to adjust ourselves to our environment.

1.1. India as Interactive Society

The beginning of Indian civilization, such as Indus valley, has a connection to Sumerians with whom the ancient Indians had such intimate relationship.[2] We hear of Indians having trade relationships with the West and the rest of the world in Ancient India and Medieval imperial powers like Choḷās having political conquest of the South Eastern Asia up to Kaḍāram (Malaysia).[3] Twentieth century encounter of Indians with the West opened up a possibility once again to interact with the other countries in terms of physical movements like going abroad for various purposes of labor, study, commerce and getting settled down in those countries. Contemporary interactions with the rest of the world witnessed Indians going outside the country with an internationalist spirit.

Indian philosophical and religious texts have all illustrated a process of refuting the claims of other traditions before establishing one's own; for instance, *Śivajñānasiddhiyar* and *Brahmasūtra.* The Buddhists, Jains, Vedantins, Naiyaikas, Samkhyans and Siddhantins all have an argumentative tradition of enumerating the positions of others and refuting them before arguing their case, meaning India allowed every tradition to argue its case and to co-exist with others.[4] Among the celebrated twin epics of Tamil Nadu, *Silappadhikāram*

2 S. Panneerselvam, "The Tirukkurral: The Cultural Paradigm and the Critique of the Life-world of the Tamils," in *The Life-World of the Tamils: Past and Present – I,* ed., R.Balasubramanian, Vol. VI, Part 5, in *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization* (New Delhi: Centre for Studies in Civilizations, 2008), 731.

3 N. Subramanian, *History of Tamil Nadu - Upto AD 1565* (Madurai: Ennes Publications, 1983), 155. For trade and commerce of the Tamil Nadu in South India, refer P.Shanmugam, "Trade, Commerce, and Crafts of the Early Medieval Tamils (End of the 12th Century AD)," in *The Life-World of the Tamils,* 694-729.

4 See, Amartya Sen, *Argumentative Indian.* London: Penguin, 2006.

and *Maṇimēkalai*, we find reference to varieties of religious and philosophical systems prevalent in the end of the fifth century when its writer Sāttanār lived. Further he believed that only such a religious knowledge helps one to suppress one's mind, giving no room for hatred and anger, to wipe out the misery of the poor, to feed the destitute, and to extend compassion to all beings.[5] The *Silappadhikāram* is an outcome of religious consciousness that exhibits the various religions born and grown in India working actively.[6]

1.2. India as a United Home of Differences

As a home contains differences among family members where no uniformity could be achieved even though all belong to a family, nation as a home of many religious groups could necessarily contain differences and should foster freedom of thought, understanding, outlook and taste.[7] India has a religious history with glorious instances and narrations of harmony and integration among different faiths. "Historically, India has been a laboratory of cross fertilization of religious ideas and secular thought; and one of the greatest confluences of cultural strands… The composite culture of India is a product of borrowing, sharing and fusing through processes of interaction between two or more streams and such cultural symbiosis has given birth to greater vitality and larger acceptability."[8] Going to the root of interreligious relations, the Vedic spirit of being united with differences is worth mentioning; *ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadānti* (Ṛgveda*,* 1.164.46)

India as a country, the home of world's great religions, giving birth to Vedism, Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism, Saktism, Ganapatyam, Sauram, Kaumaram (Modern Hinduism), Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism

5 S.N. Kandaswamy, "Socio-Philosophical Perspectives in the Maṇimēkalai," in *The Life-World of the Tamils,* 288. Bhūta-vāda, Ājīvaka, Jainism, Vedic systems, Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Brahma-vāda are mentioned.

6 S. Ravindranathan, "The Socio-Cultural and Philosophical Dimensions in the Silappadhikāram," in *The Life-World of the Tamils,* 238.

7 Swami Lokeswarananda, "Foreword," *Harmony of Religions: The Relevance of Swami Vivekananda,* K.P. Aleaz (Calcutta: Punthi-Pustak, 1993), xiv.

8 K.P. Aleaz, *Harmony of Religions: The Relevance of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Punthi-Pustak, 1993), 11-12.

and diverse faiths such as Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam, Ba'haism, and Judaism also established the independent traditions. "It is widely recognized that Hinduism is one of the most complex systems of religions, including within it, such diverse approaches as archaic beliefs and worship of animistic deities, and also doctrines and systems of thought of great depth as the various schools of the Vedanta and the *bhakti* movement."[9] The term 'Hindu' highlights the loose sense of accommodating many traditions with wide divergence, variety of customs, practices, languages, religious practices, dresses, food habits, traditions and beliefs. Difficulty remains in defining the uniting thread of Hinduism with no specific origins, no single authoritative text, no particular place of pilgrimage, many systems of philosophy and many rituals. "Within the liberal fold of Hinduism many pre-Vedic and non-Vedic elements, on scrutiny, have been duly recognized."[10] Regional religious sects, sub-sects, cults have also been included in the fold of Hinduism making it the most tolerant and all-embracing tradition and as a living organism liable to change.[11] Successful assimilation of indigenous traditions led India to adapt itself to new cultural incursion from Persia, Mangolia and Europe through Muslim and Colonial rule for about a millennia. They have undoubtedly helped in the development and expansion of Indian cultural horizon. Thought and life of Indians have been shaped by 'dialoguing,' not merely sorting out differences and getting consensus, but understanding each other better.

1.3. Indian Spirit of Dialogue and Synthesis

Besides the pluralistic vision, Vedantic thinking has helped perception of unity beyond the multitude. Such synthetic turn, special significance of Indian cultures, has permeated and qualified Indian mind with synthetic monism, many-sided unitarianism, and cosmic universalism. Without denying the fact that there were tendencies, thoughts and

9 N.S.S. Raman, "Introduction," *Hinduism – I,* Vol. VII. Part 3 of *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization* (New Delhi: Centre for Studies in Civilizations, 2013), 3.

10 D.P. Chattopadhyaya, "Foreword," *Hinduism – I,* xi.

11 M.K. Gandhi, *Hindu Dharma,* reprint 1978 (New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1993), 20-21.

even religious movements characterized by exclusive claims, counter-claims, quarrels and intolerance, however, the efforts at synthesis have prevailed. Ascertaining catholicity and unitive perception, tendency to uphold manifold sides and rich variations of the forms, Indian religions aimed at drawing and accommodating all human being and all life.[12] Even extreme philosophies and religions that hold life to be ultimately meaningless and quest for the ultimate is futile are given their proper place and value, creating favorable conditions for the growth and development of many-sided religious. Various systems of thought are recognized indicating a design to have free thinking in the socio-human framework, along with accommodating and appreciating the many sidedness of the belief-structure. The feature of liberalism and catholicity highlighted in Indian culture does not however endorse that any single form of belief/attitude is considered to be alone absolutely sacrosanct.[13]

Personalities and thinkers stressed the unity and integral fusion of all traditions with their inclusive approach, emphasizing harmonious living in true spirit of fellowship and fellow-feeling. The universalist aspect of religions has been experimentally realized by Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Tagore insisting on the religious experience, unifying all religious differences. Instead of developing this unifying process, linguistic, cultural and religious differences are kept up[14] highlighting the inter-cultural, interreligious dialogical psychology of India. Gandhi recognized this and upheld the uniqueness of each tradition and respecting all other traditions, without compromising particular features, yet promoting mutual understanding and interactions for bringing in harmony and peace, making alive Indian pluralism.

12 Kireet Joshi, "Landmarks and Distinctive Features of Hinduism," in *Hinduism – I,* 22-23.

13 Bijayananda Kar, "The Schools of Indian Philosophy and their Influence on the Development of Hinduism," in *Hinduism – I,* 217.

14 Authors like A K Sarkar decry this as a failure of developing a unifying process. Anil Kumar Sarkar, "Preface," *Dynamic Facets of Indian Thought*, xiii. But we see this as core of Indian psyche to entertain the differences, fostering interaction and coexistence.

2. Gandhian School of Religious Interaction

As a true son of the soil, Gandhi was able to imbibe the pluralist spirit of his home land. Born and brought up as Hindu *vaiṣṇava,* Gandhi "got an early grounding in toleration for all branches of Hinduism and sister religions,"[15] and later had been exposed to other traditions. His exposure created in him long struggle of identity and difference. He overcame the conflict within and articulated principles of religious interaction. Gandhi became rooted in his tradition and open to others, upholding true nature of Indian diversity. Claiming himself as *sanatani* (universalist) Hindu, he could be a Christian, a Buddhist and a Muslim. For him Hinduism is not sectarian, but includes all.[16] Understanding religious conflicts arising out of an attitude of attachment to one's own tradition blurring one's vision of right and wrong to think, 'right or wrong my religion is the best,' and to feel oneself as the sole possessor of truth,[17] Gandhi trained himself in the Indian school of religious tolerance, accommodation, assimilation and interaction, and left behind him a legacy of authentic interreligious relations.

2.1. Gandhi's Commitment to Pluralistic Society

During 1869-92, through his father's friends who were Jains, Musalmans and Parsis Gandhi learnt tolerance for other faiths. "Only Christianity was at the time an exception. I developed a sort of dislike for it… Missionaries [were] pouring abuse on Hindus and their gods."[18] In his boyhood he had Muslim and Parsi classmates as friends. In England he shared room with a Christian friend, breaching boundaries of caste and religion, strict conventions, learning new ways of being in the multi-cultural/religious world. His South-African years (1893-1914) had greater impact on his life to witness racial, religious and caste barriers. Most of his clients were Muslims, and he even stayed with a Muslim. Although relationship with others in South Africa might be purely professional, it helped him recognize cultural,

15 Homer A Jack, *The Gandhi Reader: A Source book of his Life and Writings* (Madras: Samata Books, 1983), 16.

16 Refer, *Harijan,* April 27, 1947; *Harijan,* April 30, 1938.

17 Ramjee Singh, *Gandhi and the Modern World* (New Delhi: Classical Publishing Company, 1988), 23.

18 Homer A Jack, *The Gandhi Reader,* 16.

linguistic and religious differences. Life and struggle in South Africa made Gandhi emerge as a pluralist knowing the vital importance of dialoguing with different traditions. He also emerged as a true Indian recognizing the true identity of his home land of diversity. We see the impact immediately after he assumed leadership of the Indian National Congress in 1916, reorganizing the party, recognizing diversities in all three presidencies of British India.[19] In bringing in Hindu-Muslim unity, Gandhi wanted to continue with the pluralistic fabric of India. Even after independence, he wanted Indian state as pluralistic secular and not as monolithic Hindu. Speaking of the open-mindedness of Gandhi, Louis Fischer states, "No ism held him rigid in its grip. No theory guided his thoughts or actions. He strove to keep his mind open. He reserved the right to differ with himself."[20]

Gandhi was aware of the problems of religious pluralism. Identifying religious conflicts as results of exclusivism, subjective misunderstanding and ignorance of other traditions, Gandhi suggested for effective interaction among traditions for a better society. The religious hatred pained him much and devoted his whole life to bring about harmony and peace.[21]His acquaintance with good Christian from Manchester from whom he found a Christianity of the Scriptures which is contrary to his own Rajkot recollections, that changed his perspective. Further in Pretoria he attended prayer meetings, conventions of Christians and appreciated their faith.[22] Further, looking at the humanizing elements in religions, Gandhi wanted to revive them to be a force to inculcate a new culture of pluralism in the society based on ethical and moral component of religions.[23] Thus,

19 See, Ramachandra Guha, "Waiting for the Mahatma - Gandhi & India in 1915," A Lecture at Mani Bhavan Gandhi Sangrahalaya (Mumbai) on 10th January, 2015 to mark the centenary of Gandhiji's return to India (on 9th January 1915). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JF2hn44zcKY accessed on 30th June, 2016.

20 Louis Fischer, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1983), 151.

21 P.L. John Panicker, *Gandhi on Pluralism and Communalism* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2006), 163-71.

22 Homer A Jack, *The Gandhi Reader,* 35.

23 P.L. John Panicker, *Gandhi on Pluralism and Communalism,* 170.

not only criticizing the religions of their exclusivism, he reversed his own misunderstanding and proposed solutions for better interactions.

2.2. Gandhi's Critical Interaction with Christianity

Gandhi's upbringing and exposure to texts of other religions make him not only be firmly rooted in his own but also be a critic and understanding other traditions.[24] He said, "From my youth upward I learnt the art of estimating the value of scriptures on the basis of their ethical teaching" (*Harijan,* 18-4-1936). He was open to other religions in learning the precepts of other. He imbibed Jesus' Sermon on the Mount so thoroughly that he allowed it to affect his life in all its dimensions, as observed by Pushparajan.[25] Nonetheless he was a critic of Christianity. Gandhi wrote, "The message of Jesus, as I understand it, is contained in his Sermon on the Mount as a whole, unadulterated and taken as a whole…Much of what passes as Christianity is negation of the Sermon on the Mount" (*Young India,* 8-11-1927). Gandhi was very much informed of Christian faith, but very much disturbed too by the practices of Christians. He could not appreciate the Christian church, "Europe is today only nominally Christian. It is really worshipping Mammon…His [Jesus] so-called followers measure their moral progress by their material possessions" (*Young India,* 8-9-1920). He encountered sincere and serious difficulty in understanding Christianity.[26] His encounter with Christians made him say "to be a Christian was to have a brandy bottle in one hand and beef in the other" (*Young India,* 31-12-1931). Observing the dichotomy between the Christian belief and life style, Gandhi was critical of Christians. His criticism does not mean that he was intolerant of religions but he depreciated any alliance of religion and politics for promoting war, conflicts and exploitation.[27]

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24 B.R. Nanda, *Gandhi and His Critics* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 5-7.

25 A. Pushparajan, "Interreligious Relations: A Christian Learning Curve," in *Interreligious Insights,* Vol.VI, No. 4 (Oct 2003), 39. Ethics of Christ as in Sermon on the Mount and Jain principle of *ahimsa* was helpful for him to develop a non-violent resistance movement as foundation for his struggle for independence.

26 P.D. Devanandan, *Preparation for Dialogue* (Bangalore: Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, 1964), 97.

27 M.G. Gupta, *Gandhism Redefined* (Agra: MG Publishers, 1991), 94.

Another difficulty Gandhi faced in Christianity was its tendency to proselytize. He became suspicious of numerical expansion of Indian Christian church to be tools of Western colonial powers. He wrote, "I hold that proselytizing under the cloak of humanitarian work is to say the least, unhealthy… in my opinion these practices are not uplifting and give rise to suspicion if not even secret hostility…" (*Young India*, 23-4-1931). Secondly conversion does not result in any real change of character, but remains only with superficial change in outward manner of life. Mass conversions have only 'group accessions to the Church,' rather than to individual conversion. Challenging the system of belief of Christianity as the only true religion, Gandhi questions, "Why do you think that the truth lies only in believing in Jesus as you do?... God is not encased in a safe to be approached only through a little hole in it, but that He is open to be approached through billions of openings by those who are humble and pure of heart. I invite you to step down from your pinnacle where you have left room for none but yourself."[28] And again speaking of the Indian Christians 'aping' the missionaries and adapting European culture, he says that they are 'denationalized'; "Many Christian Indians were ashamed of their birth, certainly of their ancestral religion, and of their ancestral dress" (*Young Indian*, 20-8-1925). Thus, Gandhian interaction with Christianity was a result of his encounters with Christians and the Scriptures, learning as well as critiquing the faith and practices. His attitude to Christianity is difficult to judge, as he had both criticism and appreciation of Christian faith as it is presented in its scriptures and practiced by both bad and good Christians. "In short, Gandhi inherited the best of Hindu religious traditions and yet revered the Christian Testament and Jesus Christ without ceasing to be a Hindu."[29]

2.3. Finding a Common Ground of Religions

Acknowledging that every religion has its own space and right to exist, Gandhi worked towards finding a common ground of religions using

28 Excerpts from a letter written by M.K. Gandhi to Mrs. Satyavati Chidambar, an Indian Christian, as cited in A. Pushparajan, "Interreligious Relations: A Christian Learning Curve," in *Interreligious Insights,* 39.

29 T.S. Devadoss, *Mahatma Gandhi* (Madras: University of Madras, 1995), 49.

certain Indian models from philosophical and religious systems.[30] The tolerant attitudes of 'eclecticism' or 'syncretism' of making a division of *astika-nastika*, in accommodating different ancient religious and philosophical traditions are attractive to Gandhi to support his pluralistic approach. Besides this, advaitic method of including all traditions to have a synthetic culture in India and Jain approach of *anēkāntavāda* in accommodating different views as multiple faceted approach to reality, gave Gandhi insights for his integral approach to religious pluralism in India.[31] For Gandhi, religion viewed existentially tends to differ but ultimately all have only one purpose. The apparent differences are no more than contextual differences. From the epistemological understanding of 'truth' Gandhi could dwell on the ontological dimension 'being' as truth revealing that if a distinction of the knower and the known is transcended at the height of the human quest, both are united in a state of mystical communion owing to their essential identity with a single, Reality.[32] He acknowledged the Jain theory of multifaceted reality, *anēkāntavāda,* where every individual view is right from one's own point of view and one would be wrong if one thinks that all those who entertain beliefs other than one's own are misconceiving them.[33]

Gandhi's wide religious reading persuaded him to believe that all religions are true. He advocated *sarvadharma-samabhāva,* reverence for all religions.[34] His equality and reverence does not imply any religious indifferentism or a bland universalism. For him religious differences are very real, but he stressed on the unity in their depths.[35] He aimed not at fusion of religions, "Each religion has its own contribution to make to human evolution. I regard the great faith for

30 M.K. Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi,* Vol. LXIV (New Delhi: Publications Divisions, 1958), 398.

31 P.L. John Panicker, *Gandhi on Pluralism and Communalism*, 172.

32 R.N. Iyer, "Gandhi," in *Thinkers of the 20th Century,* Elilzabeth Devine, et.al. (New Delhi: Himalayan Books, 1987), 199.

33 K. Ramakrishna Rao, *Gandhi and Applied Spirituality* (New Delhi: ICPR, 2011), 128.

34 T.S. Devadoss, *Mahatma Gandhi,* 45-46.

35 Ignatius Jesudasan, *Gandhian Theology of Liberation* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1987), 293-94.

the world as so many branches of a tree, each distinct from the other though having the same source" (*Harijan,* 28-01-1939). For Gandhi, the universal in religion is the outlook and not a body of doctrines.[36] The aim of fellowship is to make a Hindu to become a better Hindu, a Muslim a better Muslim and a Christian a better Christian.[37]

2.4. Gandhian Lessons for Interreligious Encounter

Gandhi in his interreligious encounter, asserted as *sanātani* Hindu, at the same time observing essential teachings of other religions, understanding and interpreting them, condemning the evil practices of all religions including his own. Gandhi, who was against Christians because of his earlier experiences, later appreciated it after reading, learning and understanding them. He was satisfied that Christians gradually began to realize the value of other religions and showed signs of tolerance. Gandhi believed that religion cannot be apart from human activity and problems of everyday life.[38] In writing to Jinnah, "I suggest our meeting face to face rather than talking through correspondence,"[39] making clear that he believed in dialoging, meeting the opponent face to face. He believed in harmony of religions, yet worked not for universalizing only one religion, as all are important and true. Believing that there would be always different religions answering to different temperaments and conditions, he envisioned people of different religions would have the same regard for other faiths as they had for their own.[40] Every religion has a duty to enrich the other. Interacting with the other tradition does not only find differences and defects in them, but also enables one to become aware of the pitfalls in one's own and to take steps to reduce those imperfections.[41] He saw goodness and accepted Christian ethics, but embraced its religion. For him, conversion is not to be vertical in terms

36 K. Ramakrishna Rao, *Gandhi and Applied Spirituality,* 213-14.

37 Ramjee Singh, *Gandhi and the Modern World,* 24-33.

38 K.N. Tiwari, *World Religions and Gandhi* (New Delhi: Classical Publishing Company, 1988), 7-40.

39 Homer A Jack, *The Gandhi Reader,* 419.

40 Ignatius Jesudasan, *Gandhian Theology of Liberation,* 296. Cf., *Harijan,* Feb 2, 1934.

41 Homer A Jack, *The Gandhi Reader,* 36.

of changing one's religion, but to be horizontal in relating with other traditions without changing one's own. Gandhi held that religion is for emancipation of people. With such a vision and practice, Gandhi envisioned his home land with fellowship and interaction among traditions in preserving the plural character of India. Understanding Gandhi as a pluralist, Prof. Pushparajan sees a model of interreligious interaction.

3. Interreligious Relations: Contribution of Prof. Pushparajan

Inspired by Gandhi during his years of academic pursuit, introduced by a Jain professor K. J. Shah, Prof. Pushparajan journeyed along the path of interreligious dialogue in promoting harmony and peace in the society. His contributions are noteworthy and motivational. Learning from interacting with the neighborhood in multi-cultural and religious setup, Pushparajan in his life-career as an educator broke boundaries and paved way for innovative paths to reach greater horizons in re-claiming Indian plurality, through critical thinking, prolific writing, courageous initiatives and pioneering activities. He believes in re-claiming the 'home' of Indian diversity by re-reading Gandhian vision and life through interreligious dialoging in both word and deed. Deepening our religious home is prerogative of every son of this soil which nurtured and celebrated differences. As a true son of the soil, Pushparajan's life and activities are best illustrative of this commitment.

3.1. Interreligious Grooming

Early years in Michaelpatinam, a South Indian Christian village, Pushparajan was brought up with Christian identity but relating with Hindu neighbours as brothers and sisters. The catechesis of his times with pre-Vatican II theology, made him feel superiority of Christian faith and consider Hindu beliefs and practices as inferior. Groomed with religious isolation, even as a seminarian he felt as going on the right path of Christian spirituality. He acknowledges that a realization of shallowness of his spirituality came only years later when he came in contact with a deeply spiritual person, his research-guide, Professor K. J. Shah. The interaction made him feel that he

was 'conversing' with his life in imparting what spirituality is in practical sense. "Most inter-religious meetings in our country are still full of 'parallel monologues.'"[42] The 'dialogue of life' is felt in the phase of interaction which led him to the next phase of integration of 'learning' from the other and filling the gap in one's understanding and religious practices. Pushparajan was able to integrate his religion with other religions. He was happy to find conciliar and post-conciliar documents of Vatican Council breaking boundaries of isolation and assertion, giving room for interreligious dialogue. Studying Gandhi's fascination for the 'Sermon on the Mount' and his critique on Christianity, Pushparajan says that such challenges have positively created a re-thinking of shedding the imperialistic and triumphalistic attitudes with imperatives of 'condemn, confront, conquer and convert.' Christianity has been changing from a position of isolation and separation to one of partnership and cooperation. He observes that phases of Isolation to Interaction to Integration leading finally to Interrelationship are pre-requisites for strengthening the bonds of religions.[43]

As a committed academician, Pushparajan felt the need for a secular Forum for promotion of interreligious relations in the context of growing intolerance, fundamentalism and campaign of hatred. The attitudinal change in people is presupposed for interreligious understanding and communal harmony, strengthening emotional bonds of national integration and human solidarity. He sought to protect the pluralist mosaic of India by educating students and training people. Establishing the department of Interreligious relations in school of religions, philosophy and humanist thought in Madurai Kamarajar University, Pushparajan aimed at creating a new Indian Renaissance. The real thrust of the department is to contribute to a value-based life with egalitarianism, economically exploitation-free and eco-friendly society, woven through the web of Indian cultural heritage. In realizing this vision, he followed a threefold approach:

42 M.M. Thomas, "Preface," *Preparation for Dialouge,* by P.D. Devanandan (Bangalore: Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, 1964), iii.

43 A.Pushparajan, "The Vocation of the Laity in a Religiously Plural World," in *Vaiharai* (2003), 35-54.

pedagogically competent, socially relevant and culturally rooted. Various levels of academic courses and researches addressed the issues of peace-crisis and value-crisis, attempting innovative experiment at gearing education to the reconstruction of society, drawing upon the fundamentals of religions and channeling them to interreligious cooperation, implementing the values in a practical way of promotion of harmony and integration.[44] Keeping young school students as target groups to instill new ideas regarding communal harmony and interreligious amity, the Department conducted many non-formal education either as co-curricular or extra-curricular activities, such as inter religious faith formation, dialogue meetings, interreligious prayer sessions, joint celebrations of major festivals, interreligious live together camps, cultural competitions, and developmental activities.[45]

The cultural programmes for Harmony conducted for school children, from school level to the zonal and then to district and state level, made the students drawn to get unconsciously involved in interreligious thinking and activity for few months.[46] The interreligious prayer groups energize people to pray for those in need and help paving way for the emotional integration of society. The Live-together Camps that provided youth with a genuine witness to God became powerful joint-witness to the life of genuine faith.[47] As secretary of the commission for dialogue in the Archdiocese of Madurai for nearly fourteen years, Pushparajan had many opportunities and created avenues to experiment upon many innovative programmes; themes of common concerns taken up; no attempt to compare or contrast religions nor to affirm superiority of one over the other; pinpointing that all religions

44 A. Pushparajan, "A Secular Forum for Interreligious Relations: An Experiment in Madurai Kamaraj University," in *Kristu Jyoti: A Youth Pastoral, Theological and Catechetical Quarterly,* Vol.18, No. 4 (December 2002), 409-14.

45 A. Pushparajan, *Madangal Thedum Manitham – Religions seeking Humanity* (Tamil)*,* (Madurai: Commission for Interreligious Dialogue, 1999), 177-86.

46 A. Pushparajan, "Palestinam Mudal Pandiya Nadu Varai –From Palestine to Padiya Country (Tamil)," in *Indiya-Tamizaha-Madurai Tirucapai Varalaru – History of Indian-Tamilnadu-Madurai Church,* ed., Madurai Anand (Madurai: Archdiocese of Madurai, 2013), 419-20.

47 A. Pushparajan, "Formation Programmes for Inter-religious Harmony," in *Jeevadhara: A Journal for Socio-Religious Research,* Vol.XXXVII, No.221 (Sep 2007), 421-26.

are fundamentally one in their common core, search for meaning of life, spiritual attainment of liberation, communion with the Divine and mission of compassion towards the afflicted.[48]

3.2. Quest for Common Goals and 'Dialogue of Life'

For Puspharajan, interreligious studies started from his village life onwards in relating with neighborhood. "India has been for centuries a *home* of diverse religious communities living in close quarters. Followers of different religions live for generations in good neighborly relations and friendly personal contacts. The cultural ethos of the people at the base is one of genuine harmony and mutual cooperation. This healthy life-base has to be strengthened—this is the primary goal of dialogue-initiatives."[49] Interreligious interaction has been casual and spontaneous in south Indian context, which is not something new but has been inherited from ancient period onwards. To substantiate our claim that the study of religions in the south Indian territory reveals that besides the major religions of India, there were equally powerful traditions such as Kaumāram, Śāktam, Gāṇāpatyam and Sauram, existed known in Sangam literature. They were either later incorporated into major religious traditions like Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism or Saktam, or considered as minor traditions or religious sects.[50] Further in interacting with his research guide and with colleagues and students he has learnt the skill of dialoguing with life, rather than with mere concepts and doctrines. Dialogue of life is transformative and positive. Pushparajan says, that he found in his journey of interreligious interaction, he was making a genuine effort to bridge the gap between belief and life. For him the core of faith is not so much a claim of certain uniqueness to a belief as the translation of the

48 A. Pushparajan, "Palestinam Mudal Pandiya Nadu Varai," in *Indiya-Tamizaha-Madurai TirucapaiVaralaru – History of Indian-Tamilnadu-Madurai Church,* 411-14.

49 S. Painadath, "Editorial," *Jeevadhara: A Journal for Socio-Religious Research,* Vol.XXXVII, No.221 (Sep 2007), 419.

50 See, A. Pandurangan, "Spiritual Heritage and Religious Practices of the Tamils: Kaumāram, Śāktam, Gāṇāpatyam, and Sauram," in *The Life-World of the Tamils,* 739-818. We have already mentioned about post Sangam Tamil epics making reference to different traditions interacting with each other on day to day basis in socio-cultural milieu of Tamil Nadu.

claim into a concrete life-style. Stressing the uniqueness of a religious belief, doctrine or practice only divides people, but emphasizing the life of uniqueness gives room for dialogue and collaboration.[51]

In the context of culture of hatred and violence, a counter-culture of establishing inter-religious understanding and inter-faith harmony is a felt need. Focus on what unites us such as working together for peace and justice, for human welfare and for the protection of the environment is paid attention to rather than discussing on the differences among the religions. Commitment to a culture of dialoguing and collaboration could be strengthened only with common endeavors and goals, asserting, "… diversity of religions is not a threat to harmony but a real catalyst for amity. Through a shared vision and a sincere dialogue with one another, the many and different religions can work together to guide the society towards love and justice, peace and prosperity… in the core of the different religions there is more that binds and unites people than that divides."[52]

Dialoging mission on life leads to respect the diversity of religions and recognize the unity in spirituality.[53]Contemporary imperative on dialogue of life is that the followers of different religions have to come together, dialogue with one another in concrete life situations and pool their sources together and tackle the common concerns of humanity.[54]Acharya Catherine Prabhujyothi states, "The *less loaded* minds of the youth and laity may be the more fertile soil for the seeds of genuine dialogue to grow and bear fruits. For them, dialogue is part and parcel of their daily life and there isn't much to undo in their less conditioned minds."[55] Taking interreligious dialogue beyond the confines restricted to experts, or to a few centres of dialogue or

51 A. Pushparajan, "The Vocation of the Laity in a Religiously Plural World," 56-57.

52 A. Pushparajan, *Interreligious Relationship for a New and Just Society* (Madurai: M.K. University, 1994), 4.

53 S. Painadath, "Dialogue: Respect Diversity, Recognize Unity," in *Jeevadhara: A Journal for Socio-Religious Research,* Vol. XXXVII, No.221 (Sep 2007), 454.

54 A. Pushparajan, "The Vocation of the Laity in a Religiously Plural World," 57.

55 Acharya Catherine Prabhujyothi, "Dialogue Oriented to National Spiritual Integration," in *Jeevadhara: A Journal for Socio-Religious Research,* Vol. XXXVII, No.221, 432.

ashrams, Pushparajan wants it to touch the life of ordinary people, and make it a way of life.

3.3. Laity and Youth as Torchbearers of Interreligious Dialogue

Pushparajan upholds the dignity and mission of the laity as ensured by second Vatican council that all the baptized belonged to People of God, irrespective of one's vocation to be clergy or laity (*Lumen Gentium,* 31). The vocation and mission of the laity in the 'world' are often understood as 'secular' which Puspharajan observes, that at least in Asian context, the world is not that secular, devoid of religious colour or devotional content. Already filled with many religious beliefs and practices Indian subcontinent has a living religious culture. Neighborhood relationships, knowing and sharing with people of other faiths, are living contexts where 'Dialogue of life' takes place. Given such a context the laity is challenged to enter into dialoguing with others, to re-look and to re-interpret one's faith and to grow in holiness. Pushparajan observes that majority of the laity still have dichotomous worldview, exclusive mind-set and condemnatory approach to other religions. When religious indifferentism, fundamentalism and irreligionism creep in, he calls for formation of laity in interreligious dialogue.[56]

Moving further, interreligious interaction from the realm of the religious to social, we find commitment towards welfare of all. "It is of course true that the use of spirituality for purposes of social reform was not unknown in the Indian tradition. Most of the saints in the *bhakti* tradition had always had a social dimension as an integral part of their spiritual teachings."[57] Contemporary thinkers like Dayananda Saraswathi, Vivekananda, Raja Ram Mohun Roy, are illustrative personalities who used religious and spiritual principles for social interventions. Interreligious interaction could serve welfare of youth of Indian society in a better manner. Elaborating on the

56 A. Pushparajan, "The Vocation of the Laity in a Religiously Plural World," 48-62.

57 Daya Krishna, *Developments in Indian Philosophy from Eighteen Century Onwards: Classical and Western,* Vol. X, Part 1, in *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization* (New Delhi: Centre for Studies in Civilizations, 2001), 292.

numerous challenges and problems of life faced by youth of today, Pushparajan calls for an adequate response to address them and offer service to them through cultivating interreligious sensibilities. Faith formation as an essential program of youth service is proposed as the real remedy to youth's problems. Having a keen interest in forming the young for promoting interreligious relations Pushparajan found new avenues for creation of a dialogue culture in our society.[58] They need to be shown the communalistic and fundamentalist groups in religions are only marginal and not the core of any religion. In a world of value turnover, acceleration of value change, fragmentation of society, faith-crisis is connected to materialistic, consumeristic and hedonistic preferences of life style. Problems of self-alienation, depersonalization, dehumanization and impersonalization along with societal issues of economic disparity, inequality and injustice affect life of people. Training in spiritualist world-view, cultivation of moral and spiritual values, initiation into altruistic values, realization of the spirit of collaborating with others, are possible by interreligious dialogue.[59]

Concluding Remarks

Indian home of diversity has a pluralistic flavor in every aspect of life lived here. Coexistence of different traditions has been a fact despite the historical instances of confrontation and conflicts. Gandhi through his thought and life tried to uphold the pluralistic character of his religious 'home' land where differences are accommodated and assimilated as in modern Hinduism and through philosophical approaches of Advaitic non-difference and Jaina *anēkāntavada.* As true Gandhian and Indian Christian thinker, Pushparajan brilliantly and committedly worked out his interreligious thinking and acting in clarifying the tenets, approaches and goals of interreligious encounters towards better Indian society. With the rise of communalism, religious fundamentalism, and fanaticism, confrontations with the other traditions cause evil and danger of human disintegration and

58 A. Pushparajan, *Interreligious Relationship for a New and Just Society,* 5-7.

59 A. Pushparajan, "Interreligious Dialogue: An Imperative Service to the Youth Today," in *The Journal of Religious Studies,* ed., Nirbhai Singh, Vol. XXIII, No.2 (Autum 1993), 81-100.

disharmony. In such a context, Pushparajan designed a pedagogic theory and practice to respond to the situation, for protecting and preserving the pluri-cultural mosaic of the Indian heritage. Coexistence of different traditions enriches plural society and saves it from the dangers of religious exclusivism, interreligious hatred, and aggressive nationalism. Puspharajan has been moving beyond the accepted realms of meeting the other religions for deepening our partnership for promoting peace and harmonious living.

REVISITING PUSHPARAJAN'S POSITIONING OF GANDHI

S. Lourdunathan[1]

Abstract: *Dr. Pushparajan has extensively written on the relevance of Gandhian ideals to address many social concerns. This article makes a critical assessment of his positioning of Gandhi. He presents the Gandhian way as the best possible way to address the various social concerns. Although one can appreciate Pushparajan's commitment to Gandhian ideals, his writings present a twofold philosophical problematic: (i) the theoretical position of Pushparajan namely universalism vs. particularism and (ii) his methodology of proof-text to argue his case for Gandhian ideals and interreligious social harmony. Firstly, the argumentation of Dr. Pushparajan relies on the different premises but with a singular conclusion, namely, the 'Gandhian way' is 'employable' for communal, interreligious social harmony. Such a position of Pushparajan leaves open the philosophical problem of reconciling the universal with the particular purely on ideational basis. Does absolute universal goodness necessarily rely on the religious premises and Gandhian textualities to be authenticated? Mere claims to universalism can be seen as a way of veiling or sabotaging the particularistic claims for justice and equality. Thus the dilemma of universalism vs. particularism and absolute moral-claim vs. particular religious/cultural practices seems to be evaded by Pushparajan through the Gandhian emission. Secondly, the deductive*

1 Dr. Pushparajan was my professor and research guide, to whom I am indebted for a disciplined work-commitment; he has been in the discourse of Gandhian ideals in its utterance and performance for a long period. His scholarship, commitment and identifications with Gandhian ideals oblige me to this discussion on *Revisiting Pushparajan's Positioning of Gandhi*.

method of using moral universalism as universal prescriptivism (major premise) through selected Gandhian Textualities (minor premise) to the possible conclusion of social harmony can either be an insufficient distribution or can also be distributed by any other minor premises. The methodology of (Gandhian) textual authentication is epistemologically not-so-sufficient for the reasons that text-proofs can either be ad infinitum or else one can also point out counter texts from the same person to argue against the original position. Despite Pushparajan's ardent desire for social concerns and passionate treatment of religions and Gandhi for the promotion of social harmony, the philosophical problematic of universal morality attuned with the proof-texts of both religions and Gandhi seems to be unresolved and evaded.

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This paper is an attempt to position Dr. Pushparajan's engagement of Gandhian ideals by way of reading some of the selected writings of his. At the very outset, Dr. Pushparajan's writings give an impression that he strongly believes that Gandhi or his ideals to be solutions to most problems of human society. Be it traditional or modern, communal, (social, political, economic), scientific-technological developmental or even ecological, Pushparajan seems to be devoted to a presupposition that Gandhian morality is best solution to combat problems of society. His extensive engagement of Gandhian ideals indicates that Dr. Pushparajan perceives Gandhi to have an appealing significance to respond to a wide range of cultural, religious, social and political concerns. Given to this overarching use of Gandhi, my simple quest in this paper is this: *To what extent Dr. Pushparajan's signification of Gandhi is significant or signifiable, and* how *or in what manner such signification is tenable or justifiable?* This is the crux of the discussion of this paper.

To this end let me first summarise Dr. Pushparajan's positioning of Gandhi from his writings on Gandhi; it will enable an understanding of the manner in which he has utilised and signified the Gandhian ideals, which in turn, (I belief) would be helpful to discuss the justifiability of Pushaparajan's positioning of Gandhi. Selected articles of Dr. Pushparajan are the following: (1) *Gandhian Blueprint*

for Interreligious Cooperation in India, (2) *Gandhi's Contribution to Interreligious Harmony*, (3) *Sarvadharma Samabhava: The Gandhian Solution to Religious and Communal Problems*, (4) *Body, Gender and Sexuality in Family Context*, [2] (5) *Relevance of Gandhian Eco-Vision Today*, [3] (6) *Gandhi's Trans-Religious Concept of God*.

A. Dr. Pushparajan's Positioning of Gandhian Precepts

1. In his paper on "*Gandhian Blueprint for Interreligious Co-operation in India,*" Dr. Pushparajan empathetically situates the credentials of Gandhi to promote interreligious cooperation. While instantiating the Gandhian life in terms of (a) his personal quest and (b) social involvement towards interreligious cooperation, he goes on to position (c) the Gandhian understanding of religion on the grounds of *essentialism or universalism*. Dr. Pushparajan observes that Gandhi upheld a universalistic or essentialist moral outlook on religion beyond the apparent differences of rites and cultural practices. The essential universal moralistic position of Gandhi (according to Dr. Pushparajan) foregrounds derivable blue print for communal/ interreligious cooperation.

2. In the paper on "*Gandhi's Contribution to Interreligious Harmony*," (almost in the similar manner as in the above paper) Dr. Pushparajan positions Gandhian life and ideals as a fertile ground for interreligious harmony. He points out that the Gandhian understanding of Hinduism is a re-moulded/reformed understanding in terms of its universal-value-orientation, and hence paves way for interreligious and communal harmony. He explains that Gandhi while accepting the four Varnas as Hindu social system was fervently against the practice of untouchability. The *Gita* for Gandhi must not be treated in the literal sense of an historical war between the ruling classes but must be understood as a war between good and evil. Similarly Christianity must be understood for its morality beyond its historical specificities. Islam does promote non-violence and peaceful co-existence. Further,

2 Revised paper presented at the 40th Annual Research Seminar of the ACPI, held at Vijnananilayam**,** Janampet, Eluru, A.P., 22-25, Oct. 2015.

3 *Journal of Dharma: Dharmaram Journal of Religions and Philosophies*, Vol- 31, No. 4, (Oct-Dec 2006).

Dr. Pushparajan's arguments for Gandhi as interreligious person relies on the idea that *all religions must be treated for their absolute claims of morality, and religions are instruments to address the imperfections of human as to educate them towards more perfections without losing sight of one's allegiance of his/her religious affiliations and cultural specificities*. The seemingly pluralistic relativism of various religions is due to the differentia of perceptions by humans and not necessarily the absolute religion's claim towards universal morals. Moreover, the relative differentia of human perceptions is intimately connected with absolute truth claims of religions for reasons of enabling oneself towards perfection or absolute good.

3. One of the chapters of Dr. Pushparajan's Ph.D. thesis (I belief) is titled as '*Sarvadharma Samabhava: The Gandhian Solution to Religious and Communal Problems.*' Here he portrays Gandhi as a '*true'* religious in a multiple sensibilities of being a Hindu, Christian[4] and Muslim, once again relying on his cultivated argument that all religions are moral, Gandhi is moral in the sense of all religious-claims, and therefore the way of being Gandhian is communal and the best possible solution to Communal problems. Gandhi, according to Dr. Pushparajan, considered all religions as equally valid and different paths to the same God and for the realisation of this God. Gandhi had respect for religions for their morality and divine inspiration. All religions promote 'dharma' or moral goodness.[5] Here, Pushparajan's position on Gandhi revolves around *the issue of particularity of religions and their universality of moral claim for goodness.*

4 Gandhi has said: 'The life of Jesus has the significance and the transcendence to which I have alluded. I believe that He belongs not solely to Christianity, but to the entire world: to all races and people, it matters little under what flag, name or doctrine they may work, who possess a faith, or worship a god inherited from their ancestors.' (Quoted from MPWMG, Vol. I, p. 543).

5 Dr. Pushparajan extensively quotes Gandhi to this claim. "All religions are divinely inspired, but they are imperfect because they are products of the human mind and taught by human beings; hence the necessity of tolerance, which is as far from the north to the south. True knowledge of religion breaks down the barriers between faith and life." (Quoted from MPWMG, Vol. I, p.519).

4. In his paper "*Body, Gender and Sexuality in Family Context*,"[6] Dr. Pushparajan begins by positioning the nature of human person as an integral/holistic unity of Spirit (S) Rationality (R) and Animalistic (A) and proceeds to explain how the frame of Gandhian thought is in consonance with this classificatory yet unifying understanding of human person. The faculty of the Spirit, according to Pushparajan, is higher than rationality and animalistic faculties. Hence both rationality and animalist faculties must be subservient to spirit so that the bodily desire for sex and vulnerability is overthrown by the focus on the domain of the Spirit. Pushparajan observes that the modernist-rationality towards the affirmation of the body-sex as natural is not sustainable as it is antithetical to the conception of the human as Spirit because being human is not the same as being an animal. Human by nature 'ought' to be guided by spirit in order to be fully human; this is crux of Pushparajan's argument.

Dr. Pushparajan further claims that (imperatively I suppose) if only this understanding is upheld in the way Gandhi held it to be, we would be able to preserve the vales of a good family and society. In support of this position Dr. Pushparajan succinctly authenticates relevant texts from Pope Francis and Pope John Paul. Pushparajan quotes: "We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being."[7] Pope John Paul II observes that the human "is a person in the unity of his body and his spirit. The body can never be reduced to mere matter: it is a *spiritualized body*, just as the human spirit is so closely united to the body that one can be described as an *embodied spirit*."[8]

5. In his paper on "*Relevance of Gandhian Eco-Vision Today*," Dr. Pushparajan positions Gandhian world view as ecological. With an elaborate discussion on the various aspects of environmental degradation, Dr. Pushparajan argues that development conceived and perpetuated as modernisation and industrialisation allied with

6 Revised paper presented in 40th Annual Research Seminar of the ACPI, held at Vijnananilayam**,** Janampet, Eluru, 22-25, Oct. 2015.

7 Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation*, *Evnagaelium Gaudium*, (2014), 8.

8 Pope John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, *Gratissimam Sane*, (1994), 19.

its politics of socialism and capitalism is seriously anti-ecological therefore insufficiently lopsided. The Gandhian principles[9] de jure are antagonistic to modernisation and industrialisation; hence the Gandhian ways are substantial to promote ecological sustainability.

6. The argumentation of Dr. Pushparajan, given to the readings of these five papers, seems to rely on the following premises but with a singular conclusion: a) all religions seek absolute goodness and despite their cultural differences they are instrumental to promote absolute moral goodness; b) plurality of religions is the practical ways of achieving universal goodness; c) modernisation is anti-ecological and lopsided and Gandhi was not in favour of such modernization; d) what is morally good is socially good and desirable; e) Gandhian precepts and notable practices propel the view that (going beyond the politicisation of religions) despite differences, religions are morally good and plurality/diversity of religious affiliation is pro-creative of moral goodness of the society; f) hence (conclusion) 'the Gandhian way' is 'employable' for interreligious cooperation, communal harmony, social development and international peace.

B. Reflective Derivations

1. Throughout his writings and life-style, Dr. Pushparajan remains to be always in the *becoming towards the precepts of Gandhian thought for reasons of promoting moral goodness i.e., social harmony.* What Dr. Pushparajan pursued for his studies bloomed to be his lifelong engagement. Most of his writings and the talks he has given to a wide range of audience revolve around these two axes—the Gandhian and the interreligious social harmony.

2. For Dr. Pushparajan, these two axes are not separate but mutually influencing facets to be Indian and religious (for him to be a Christian) amicably. Following the precepts of different religions is richly

9 Dignity of human labour, voluntary reduction of wants, voluntary poverty, production by the masses and not mass production, appropriate technology, recycling of energy, love of plants and animals, rural/village reconstruction as against city-development, non-violation of nature as resources etc.

pluralistic but ultimately all aim at absolute goodness of society. Therefore religious conflicts are to be suspended and the best example is Gandhi.

3. While positioning Gandhi, Dr. Pushparajan is often carried through his cherished theme 'interreligious dialogue' rather sympathetically and morally. How Dr. Pushparajan does combine the Gandhian and Interreligious dialogue and how they mutually play on each other is best revealed in Dr. Pushparajan's articles on "*Gandhi Views on Conversion*,"[10] and "*From Conversion to Fellowship: The Hindu-Christian Encounter in the Gandhian Perspective.*"[11]

4. However one should not jump to the conclusion that Dr. Pushparajan engages Interreligious dialogue solely from Gandhian inspiration, rather it is the other way about.

5. For Dr. Pushparajan, the Vatican II positioning on 'inter religious dialogue' paved the way to see whether Gandhian thought allows for the advocacy of inter religious dialogue, and according to him, the Gandhian and the Vatican II is in consonance with each other.

6. Perhaps I should add here that Dr. Pushparajan believes that the best possibility of being a 'Christian' in an interreligious way in the Indian society is through the Gandhian way. Put it differently, the sense of being a Christian within the Indian pluralistic cultural/ religious positioning is the way of being Gandhian is what seems to be the position of Dr. Pushparajan. The tenability of such positioning for Dr. Pushparajan, I believe, is more a matter of the practical than ideological. However in spite of the good intention *bestow(n)ed* by Pushparajan, the question, '*Can one be Christian and Gandhian at the same time*?' calls for a deeper analysis.

7. Perhaps Dr. Pushparajan is the best exemplar to position this. Both the Gandhian ideals and the Interreligious pursuits perfectly combine in Dr. Pushparajan and both these facets are pitched on the grounds of

10 Dr. A. Pushparajan, *Indian Missiological Review*, 3/2/1981.

11 Dr. A. Pushparajan, *Dialogue Series Publications* No 6, Allahabad: St Paul Publications, 1990.

pluralism as the possible truth conditions towards the signification of a morally good society.

8. Dr. Pushparajan's positioning of the Gandhian ideals navigates in the sense of seeking relevance or application with the *good* intention of projecting a good society. I may not be wrong if I observe that Dr. Pushparajan has extensively used Gandhian ideals for a wide range of their implicational relevance. Positioning a person's contribution implies a search in terms of its practical or pragmatic relevance.

9. Dr. Pushparajan's writings exhibit the fact that he is constantly concerned with social problems such as communal conflicts, ecological crisis, problems of modernity, caste conflicts etc. Alternatively, his scholarship lies in the re-visioning of Indian and international society in the sensibility of communal, social, political, interreligious and ecological harmony for projecting a peace-enduring human society.

10. Social institutions such as religion, politics, family and other cultural relations, for Dr. Pushparajan, are to be treated as 'instrumentals' (means) towards the attainment of harmonious society (end). Thus in Gandhian philosophy, *means* (religions) and *ends* (individual and social goodness), according to Dr. Pushparajan, need to be harmonious. In this sense, Dr. Pushparajan not only employs the Gandhian ideals, but strongly convinced of the Gandhian philosophical methodology, namely the philosophy of means and ends. Whether such positioning can be treated as a universal theory of application or it is relatively successful calls for further theoretical debate. However I suspend this discussion here for further exploration later.

11. Dr. Pushparajan seems to have positioned Gandhi so significantly that he seems to have been influenced by the presupposition that Gandhian ideals are perhaps the best possible solutions to problems of human society. For him, the Gandhianism is almost like a truism/ philanthropy to confront any forms of *untruism* in the society. He seems to be operating on the assumption that the Gandhian way is one of the best possible ways to respond to problems of communalism, casteism and ecology. In so doing Dr. Pushparajan presupposes the idea that problems of society (be it social or political, communal or

ecological) can be approached for viable solutions by way of foot-stepping into the Gandhian shoes.

12. Dr. Pushparajan's approach seems to be more moralistic than seriously 'analytical' of the ideological and cultural structures that construe and perpetuate the relational problems of human society. The Kantian compulsion of pure reason and simultaneously the imperative of practical reason though paradoxical but philosophically rich for continuous exploration and debate.

C. Positioning Pushparajan

1. In the first three of his above-given writings, Dr. Pushparajan seems to be addressing the particular from universalistic or absolutistic moral claim of goodness. That is the way Pushparajan positions Gandhian outlook of life/religion and society. His arguments again and again revolve in this manner. The universal/essential moral goodness demands a strong sense of forgoing any differences for reasons of promoting of social harmony. The differences of world-views, religious and cultural and social and historical specificities are only relative that ought to be set aside in order to promote harmonious society. While being sympathetic to differences, Gandhi fervently promoted this universal sense of moral goodness. The claim of universalism (goodness as such) is justifiable to forego the differences of partcularism. Hence the precepts of Gandhi are a '*way out'* to the problems of differentiations and discriminations and thereby projecting peaceful co-existence in the spirit of justice, equality and peace. The dilemma of universalism and particulralism is best evaded by Pushparajan through the Gandhian emission.

2. The intention of Dr. Pushparajan however good in the sense of claiming absolute moralism, his argumentation to this end is not free from both practical and philosophical (epistemic/ethical) concerns. On the practical side, the questions that arise are the following:

i) Can we afford to veil the practical social/political histories of religions that construe a value-hierarchy of social relations relying on the strength of mere universal moralistic-claims to be 'good'

while the practical dimensions social/religious/political facets are infested with the issues of a politics of and relations of domination and discrimination?

ii) Would not the blanket of Dharma as essentialism and universalism veil the historical and social facets and practices of social discrimination?

iii) Is it not true that religions given to their social and political history beyond the language of politics of universalism is embedded upon a politics of value hierarchical dualism and simultaneously the vulnerability of identifiable entities?

iv) Would this methodology (deducing from universality to specific conclusion - the method of deduction) tenable without exploring the very ideological, evidential and practical relations of power in cultural/religious and social ethos? Is it not true that such ontologisms are mere idealism with the pre-conception of ontological-institutional interests and not necessarily the interest of the social-particular?

3. The philosophical problematic is that most universalism is quite often dominant of moral meta-narratives that either come to stay in human mind/culture as over arching position and thereby cultural and social specificities may be either excluded conveniently or included morally. Mere claims to universalism are a way of veiling or sabotaging the particularistic claims for justice and equality. The paradoxical difficulty is that particularism cannot be voiced and presented under the veiling voice of universalism.

4. Similar type of positioning of Gandhi is found in his article on "*Body, Gender and Sexuality in Family Context*" *and* "*Relevance of Gandhian Eco-Vision Today*." It should be noted that the affirmation of the body in the contemporary philosophical discussion arises against the very historical context of the dominant emphasis/ signification of the spirit over body. Body considered as extended within the both traditional and modernist predominant ontologies (worldviews) construes the political possibility of reducing the bodily (and by extension whoever is deemed 'bodily') were ideologically

and culturally placed to be subservient to either by subordination or to the service of the dominant politics of spirit-endowed-ontologies. To argue in favour universal absolute spirit-endowed-ontologism (though within the universal holistic moralistic claim of goodness) seems to be not sufficiently dialogical, if and when Dr. Pushparajan conceives 'dialogue' as mediation towards harmony.

5. I belief, to argue repetitively on the primacy of the spirit/universal claim of goodness to the extent of placing human rationality and delineating the bodily to mere 'naturality' and 'animality' seems to be naively or tactically promoting dominant ontologies and affiliating its hierarchical unequal cultural expressions and social relations. In so doing, however, Dr. Pushparajan's intention is appealing and normatively good; perhaps it does not warrant any evaluative and ethical social actions/ expressions/ relations to be promotive of either integral wholeness or solidarity of all human in equality. The positioning of Gandhian thought (by Dr. Pushparajan) as passionately ecological relies on the claims of Gandhi against over emphasis of modernization, industrialization as the only possible paradigm of development.

6. Dr. Pushparajan's writings rely upon and revolve around the following identifiable/ distinguishable theoretical positions that interplay upon each other. They are:

(i) Moral Universalism as Universal Prescriptivism for Communal harmony

(ii) Religious pluralism conjecture a strong sense of Moral Universalism

(iii) Gandhian precepts are the best 'universal prescriptivism' (instrumentality) in terms of religious pluralism for moral universalism.

In other words the positioning of Gandhi by Dr. Pushparajan revolves around the age-old philosophical problematic of the tenability of moral universalism vis-à-vis religious pluralism or particularism (?) as the justifiable ground (?) for moral universalism, achievable through the Gandhian prescriptivism.

7. Moral universalism or universal morality is the position that certain morals are absolute and are universally applicable despite the differences of culture, race, caste sex, religion, rites, rituals, nationality etc. They exist independently of individual's emotions and cultural entailments. Moral values are true independent of human interventions. An action is right or wrong universally and they are prescriptive of human behaviour.[12] For Kant they are the moral imperatives or practical reasons and they must be regarded as equally binding on everyone. For instance the moral value 'non-killing' is universally obligatory not to kill. The contention of moral universalism and as a form of prescriptivism is that certain morals are absolute and they exist independent of any personal or cultural or religious grounds and they are prescriptive to regulate human conduct in society. Dr. Pushparajan's claims regarding both religions and the Gandhian position on religions operate on the premise that (i) Moral Universalism as Universal Prescriptivism for Communal harmony and (ii) Religious pluralism conjecture a strong sense of Moral Universalism. Such premises can only act as a form of prescriptivism and as such insufficient to address the practical politics of discriminations and differentiations. Moral prescriptivism is pre-suppositional and they are practical only to the extent of putting into practice of its presuppositions and perhaps insufficient to address the problems of communal and social disharmony at the particular and practical dimensions.

8. Dr. Pushparajan's positioning of moral universalism through the sayings of Gandhi, the methodology to arrive at this claim (by him) needs certain clarification. Dr. Pushparajan's treatment of religion within the Gandhian context to augment moral universalism is done mostly by using the methodology of textual authentication (Gandhi's sayings and public doings). Employing the method of textual authentication as epistemic legitimation—Text as Proof Method—is the way Dr. Pushparajan engages all his writings. Though this is the most common methodology adopted to prove the point in contention, the tenability of such methodology is not beyond certain limitations.

12 *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2012 Edition).

The propelling concerns about the tenability of this methodology are these:

(i) To claim that X is true universally demands that X is true by virtue of it. To say that *one should not kill the other* is true not because they are the precepts stated by certain religions or personalities, rather it is true in the sense of an 'ought' that is universally agreeable. To claim the truth that '*all men are mortal'* (P) and attune to it, the case of *Socrates being mortal* (Q) is only a possible minor premise or instantiation and not the only possible instantiation. Similarly the Gandhian premise (used by Pushparajan) is one of the minor premises and not the only possible minor premises in such deductive forms of argumentation to conclude the truth that already pre-contained in the absoluteness of the truth of major premise.

(ii) The claim that non-violence is moral in a sense of 'ought' that is true by the virtue of it (as per the universal moral sense) and not necessarily true because of Gandhi being non-violent. One need not posit a minor premise, say Gandhi is non-violent therefore following Gandhi will promote non-violent society. The truth-claims of universal morality are to be justifiable beyond the 'conditional borders or territories of either persons or social institutions. Pushparajan's treatment of universal morality (I stand for correction) within the territories of religions or Gandhi(s) seems to argue that universal goodness (P) is possible by the medium of a minor premise (The Gandhian religious views) seems to be rather asymmetrical and perhaps it is clouded with a sort of evangelical tendency that the Gandhian is the best possible human to provision humane society. To claim that X is true (universally) does not necessarily depend upon the fact that it is said or acted by someone. Should universal morality be justified on the grounds of the sayings/texts-proofs by Socrates or Gandhi or some other personalities, seems to be theoretically problematic that calls for further positioning of Dr. Pushparajan.

(iii) Moreover one might raise the issue like this: Can a truth-claim be authenticated by text-proof method? Alternate or opposite truth claim can also be authenticated following the same methodology of text-

proof? Adding dismay to this, if X is proved right or wrong by Text-proof, what is the proof of the text which serves as authentication? Would this not add a narrative after narrative *ad infinitum* with possible presupposition that the larger the number times a text is repeated greater the possibility of the affirmation of its truth claims. Numerical strength of textulization need not or does not conclusively provide justifiability of the truth of text. Pushparajan's fixation of universal morality by a series of texts (textualization) derived from Gandhi does add explanatory strength if not theoretically rational strength. Universality of moral goodness does not depend upon the X or Y holding it to be true; they are true by the virtue of its composition. Since the possibility of provisioning alternate texts from the same person (Gandhi) can invalidate the very truth-claims on the base of which Gandhi is presented to be. The epistemic problematic is what one may like to call it as the fallacy of *text-proof-text ad infinitum*. However one can treat Dr. Pushparajan's positioning of Gandhi as moral has a popular appeal in the sense of 'do good and avoid evil' and not necessarily on justifiable epistemic and ethical grounds.

(iv) Problem of universal as problem of meaning: Pluralism when theoretically rendered harps on the ideas that the quality and state of being plural is the possibility of having more than a singular sense of conceiving reality which means there exist a plurality of entities and by extension there exist a plurality of cultures and social persons who in turn perceive realities in multiple possibilities given to their autonomy and differentia of cultural ethos. And hence the claim towards universality is a sort of '*ghost in the machine*' a conceptual category which in turn is devoid of accounting and promoting the autonomy of pluralistic presence. What is universal is ideological and what is ideologically universal is bound to be construed on the conditions of hierarchy of presence rather than relations of mutual presence. So what is needed is not a movement from universality to particularity but the affirmation of particularities in their autonomous and dignified presence in terms of mutual relations.

(v) Moreover pluralism as universalism is not the only typology of pluralism (naïve pluralism) because reality is composed of a plurality

of entities and social realities which accounts for a diversity and autonomy of ethnic social groups and their interests. What is called commonality cannot be treated as universality either in the sense of history or philosophy and if what is treated as moral universality is but a sense of an ontology of an overarching/amplifying status of being to be good.

(vi) One of the most durable and intractable issues in the history of philosophy has been the *problem of universals*. Closely related to this, and a major subject of debate in 20th century philosophy, has been the problem of the nature of *meaning*. The problem of universals goes back to Plato and Aristotle. The matter at issue is that, on the one hand, the objects of experience are individual, particular, and concrete, while, on the other hand, the objects of thought, or most of the kinds of things that we know even about individuals, are general and abstract, i.e. universals. Thus, a house may be red, but there are many other red things, so *redness* is a general property, a universal. There are also many houses, and even kinds of houses, so the nature of being a *house* is general and universal also. Redness can also be conceived in the abstract, separate from any particular thing, but it cannot exist in experience except as a property of some particular thing and it cannot even be *imagined* except with some other minimal properties, e.g. extension. Abstraction is especially conspicuous in mathematics, where numbers, geometrical shapes, and equations are studied in complete separation from experience. The question that may be asked, then, is how it is that general kinds and properties or abstract objects are related to the world, how they exist in or in relation to individual objects, and how it is that we know them when experience only seems to reveal individual, concrete things. Mathematical or conceptual model of abstraction as a form of universalism is not necessarily be paralleled with social/cultural forms of life. Pushparajan's claims of universal abstracted moral goodness cannot be paroled with multi-religious cultural presences and their diversity of historical, political and institutional practices.

(vii) Even if it is granted that we have to accept the facticity of pluralism of religions (as often Pushparajan claims about multi-

religious presences), we can ask the question, on what epistemic grounds is pluralism a justified true belief for its plausibility of relativism. If pluralism is a sort of relativism and if relativism is pluralism then this would mean either it is a pragmatic relativism or relativistic nihilism. If so, the debate that rises here is that as to how we can justify pluralism either as pragmatic relativism or as relativistic nihilism epistemologically? Can pluralism as relativism and relativism as pluralism be a justified true belief? Can one be Christian and Gandhian simultaneously? If so, are these positions political rather than truth-conditioned? We need to keep ourselves intellectually open to Truth without any prejudices whatsoever.

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With a Grateful Heart ....

When I look back on what has been going on in my life during the past year, it is indeed incredible even to me! Hence I raise my joined hands, first and foremost, to the good Lord to thank Him. Even in the most turbulent times of my life, He has been the leading Star. He has always been extending his unfailing hands ahead of me in my path, guiding me and guarding me so as to get his plan fulfilled in and through this poor self! He unravels His plans through the human hands, but for which this Volume would never have seen the light of day. Hence I am inspired to pen a few lines of acknowledgement with a heart full of gratitude:

The noteworthy 'duo' of our ACPI, the masterminds of the *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* Rev. Dr. George Panthanmackel, msfs, and Dr. Johnson Puthenpurackal, ofmcap, the then President and Secretary of our Association respectively, sounded to me the idea of a *Festschrift* in my honour already a few years ago. However, I put it in cold storage for the simple reason that I honestly felt that I was too unworthy to get such a big honour.

But the idea was handed over to the present team of office bearers, who, under the able leadership of Rev. Dr. Keith D'Sousa sj, President of the ACPI and Rev. Dr. John Peter Vallabadoss ofmcap, the Secretary, revived it; the ***ACPI Executive Committee*** passed a resolution at its General Body Meeting in Eluru (October 2015) to bring out a *Festschrift* in my honour, which was indeed the triggering point of this project. The responsibility was entrusted to Rev. Dr. Johnson Puthenpurackal, the outgoing president. I really thank all those who were responsible for making such a decision.

Since then Dr. Johnson Puthenpurackal has been working on this mission untiringly. With his vast experience in the field, he was able to plan out the most relevant theme for the volume, finding prospective authors, getting their contact address, short-listing the prospective writers, circulating the letters, pursuing the matter with determination, reminding them, getting the articles right in time, editing them minutely and passing on to the press in time, and indexing them. Despite his huge responsibility as the President of *Vijnananilayam: Institute of Philosophy and Religion* at Eluru, ***Rev. Dr. Johnson Puthenpurackal*** has been so committed to this additional 'labour of love' that he has brought out the volume rich both in thought and variety. But for his generous and painstaking efforts, this project would not have been realized. There are no adequate words to express my appreciation and gratitude to him.

Next my heart goes to thank every one of the ***Cardinals*** of our motherland. I could really experience the warmth of love, the good Shepherds of the Church in India, have for me. Even amidst their countless concerns related to both Universal Church as well as the local, each one of them was kind enough to allot time for blessing me with a Message with a personal touch. I am overwhelmed with joy at the fact that ***His Beatitude, Moran Mor Baselius Cardinal Cleemis Catholicos***, President of the CBCI, not only sent a beautiful message in time but also personally rang up to me to verify that I got it. How could I express my gratitude to ***His Eminence, Oswald Cardinal Gracias***, Archbishop of Mumbai, President of the CCBI and the President of FABC, for the bountiful appreciation he has showered on me in his Message! Not only do I deem it a great privilege, but also I feel humbled because now I realize that I need to travel quite a long to get nearer to his expectations. ***His Beatitude, Mar George Cardinal Alenchery***, Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, in whose company I too was fortunate to travel through the journey of Renewal while taking part in almost all the seminars organized by Father Amalor, and subsequently in all the meetings of the CBCI Commission on Faith and Doctrines, and of the Colloquium of Bishops and Theologians, has given such a personal touch to his message that I can never forget his love, kindness and thoughtfulness. ***His Eminence,***

Telesphore P. Cardinal Toppo, Archbishop of Ranchi, has been also very perceptive of my services to the Church which His eminence has readily noticed and recognised. It is a big blessing that this volume is going to be released in the presence of His Eminence.

I owe indeed a debt of gratitude to my good old friend ***Rev. Dr. Anthony Chirappanath***, who started his professional career in the South, first as HOD of Gandhian Studies Department in Mahatma Gandhi University, but ended up as the Head of a mighty School of Development Studies in the same University. Much before that he was prime member of that 'happy group' of research scholars in Karnatak University, Dharwad in which I happened to be one. Besides, he was in the Selection Board of the Madurai Kamaraj University which appointed me in the post of Reader in Gandhian Studies. It is most fitting that he has given a 'Foreword' to this volume.

Above all, my heart bubbles with deep sentiments of gratitude to each and every one of the ***Contributors*** both abroad and across the country. Each one of them was so eager to write on a topical theme related to the upkeep of personal, social, religious, national and cosmic home. To every one of them I raise my hands, greeting them with grateful heart and appreciating them for their amazing responses.

There are so many others who have expressed their eagerness to contribute to this volume, although from all categories of the Church in India: bishops, priests, religious, my own research scholars, students, friends and well-wishers. Their wish could not be accommodated. To those unsung melodies too, I raise my sincere thanks from the bottom of my heart.

However, if this volume can initiate some interest at least in the future generations of Christian philosophers of India to take seriously the thought of a most renowned philosopher of religion in India, but not formally known as such, I would deem that the purpose of this Festschrift is fulfilled.

Into that dream, let my ACPI awake, O Lord!

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[*The Index consists of terms that stand for important notions seen from the perspective of Gandhian Thought*. – Editor]

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